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Conus

# Fundamentals of Piano Technique, Book Two

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BOOK TWO

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# FUNDAMENTALS of PIANO TECHNIQUE

by LEON CONUS

BOOK TWO
ADVANCED TECHNIQUE

ENDORSED and RECOMMENDED by

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robert CASADESUS

clifford CURZON

ania DORFMANN

ose ECHANIZ

rudolph FIRKUSNY

rudolph GANZ

vladimir HOROWITZ

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# FUNDAMENTALS OF PIANO TECHNIQUE

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BOOK TWO ADVANCED TECHNIQUE by LEON CONUS*

* see page 44 for biographical sketch

## FOREWORD

I dedicate this work of my long life to advanced pupils and aspiring teachers. The exercises here are the result of careful thought and experiment during the many years which I have spent teaching. In order to facilitate study and systematize these contents, I have divided the exercises into seven categories, first according to their classification, and second according to technical difficulty:

EXERCISES FOR EXTENSIONS..... Page 3

FIVE-FINGER EXERCISES..... Page 11

THE PASSAGE OF THE THUMB..... Page 17

EXERCISES FOR THE TRILL..... Page 23

SCALES AND ARPEGGIOS..... Page 27

EXERCISES FOR THE WRISTS..... Page 33

EXERCISES IN DOUBLE-NOTES..... Page 40

Thus, each of these series has a special aim or purpose:

The EXTENSION EXERCISES are designed to facilitate stretches, loosen the hand, strengthen the fingers and give them independence.

The FIVE-FINGER EXERCISES are designed to develop agility, strength and independence.

continued page 2

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The THUMB must be specially trained, for its responsibility in piano playing is very great in so far as skilfulness in changing positions and maintaining legato are concerned.

The TRILL is the best exercise of all for equalizing the fingers and for acquiring the "jeu perle".*

The usefulness of SCALES AND ARPEGGIOS is universally recognized, and their preponderant role in most piano pieces is excellent proof of the wisdom of working at them regularly.

Good DOUBLE-NOTES are among the most outstanding accomplishments of the virtuoso, and steady practice of them is required.

An agile, mobile and subtle WRIST is the key which opens all doors and helps to conquer technical difficulties.

Three basic human faculties must be employed and developed if one is to attain proficiency of technique; they are WILL POWER, MENTAL AND MUSCULAR COORDINATION, AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FINGERS. I consider the possession of these three faculties as a necessary foundation for all successful technical study. To obtain the best result in practicing exercises, one must vary the method of work. This can be accomplished by the following:

1. Play all exercises at different speeds and keys
2. Use different touches and nuances
3. Change all exercises by utilizing various rhythms and by displacing the accent
4. Invent different figures in addition to the ones illustrated
5. Memorize all exercises

To conclude, I should like to express my conviction that even the musical genius, possessed of inspiration, intuition, and all the other gifts of nature, still can have no real success unless at the same time he possesses a knowledge of how to work and a love of the work itself. This also appears to be a devine gift. For without this, there would have been no great men - neither scholars, nor poets, nor painters, nor architects - and certainly no great composers or interpreters.

. . . . Leon Conus

*Pearl-like playing

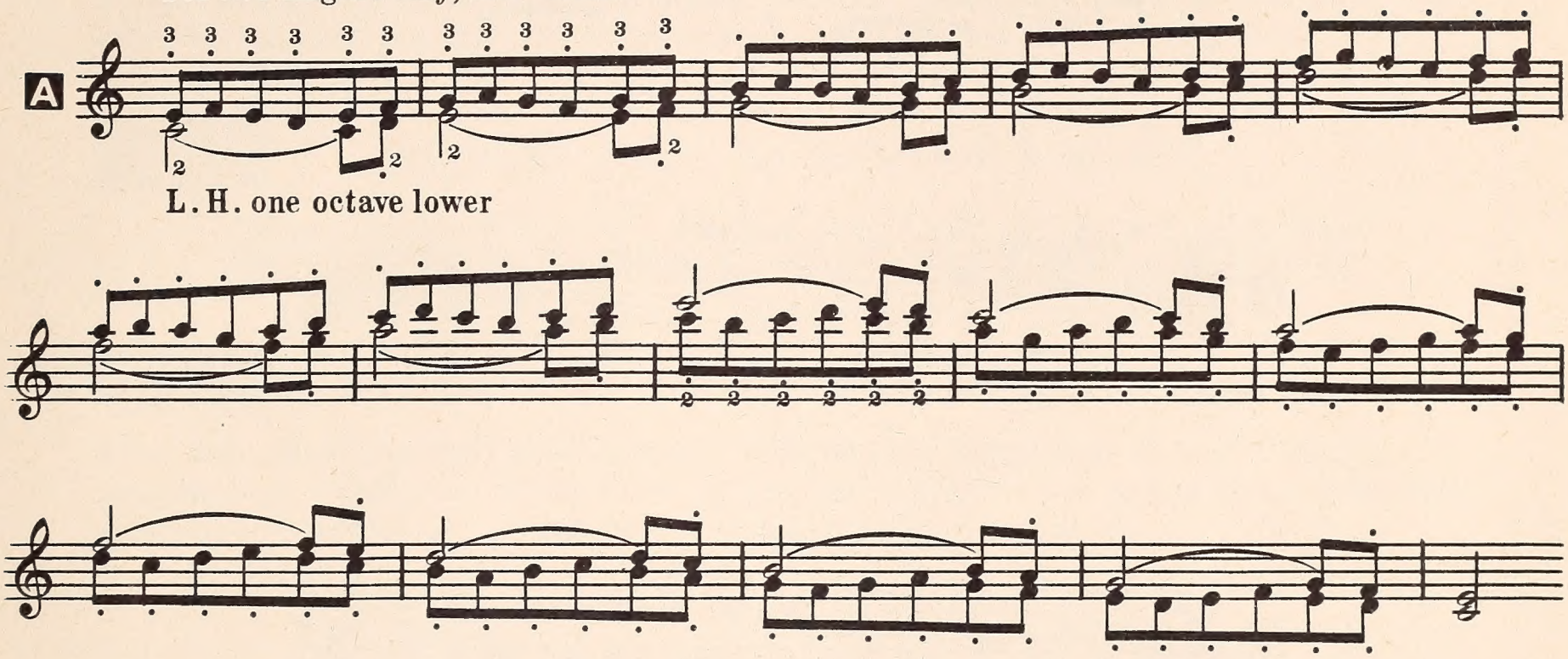
# SECTION I - EXTENSION



## Example I

For two fingers only, low wrist.

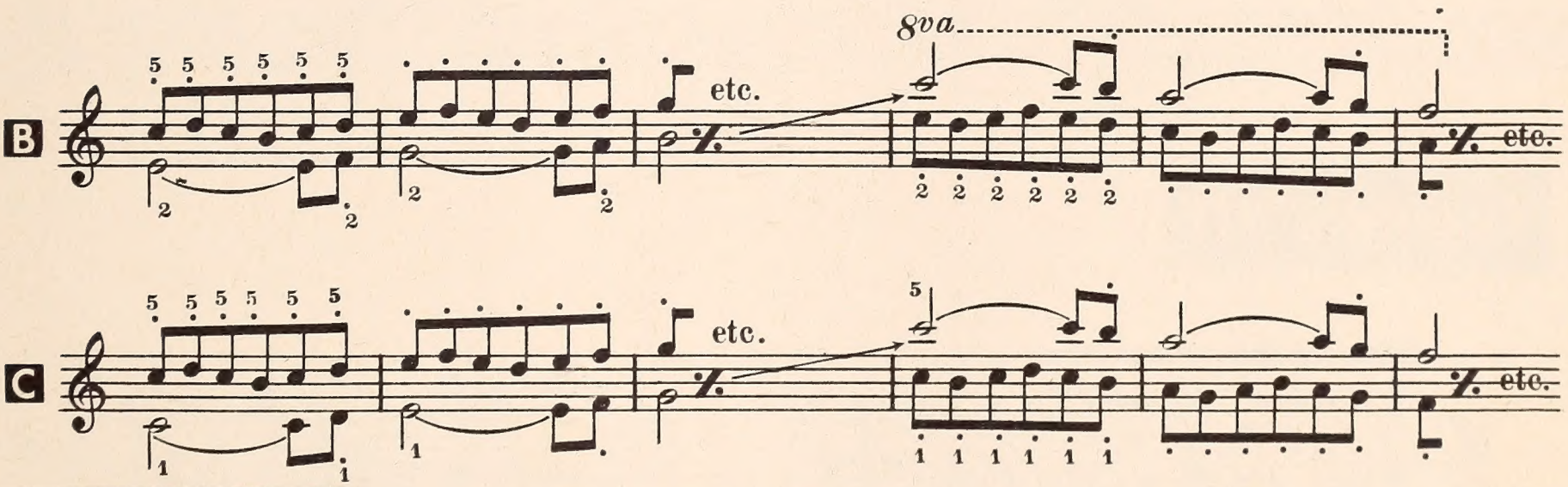
A



L. H. one octave lower

Other fingerings $\frac{4}{3}-\frac{5}{4}$

B



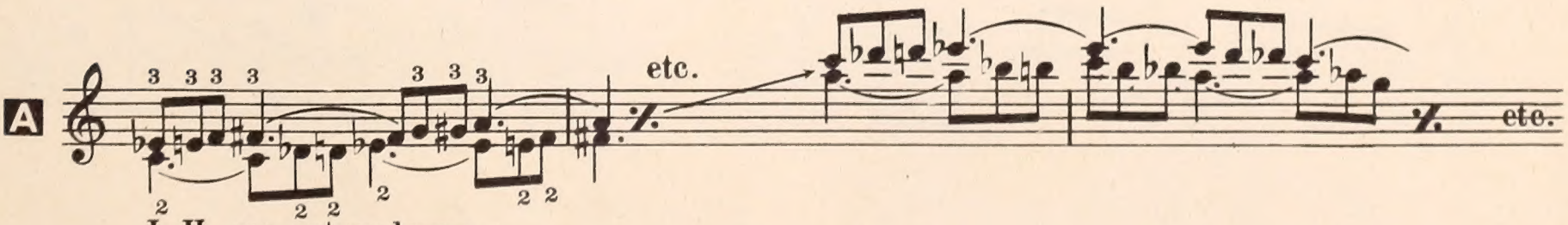

C




## Example II

Consider the size of your own hand in practicing this exercise; a large hand may add one or more notes, and a small hand may diminish the extension.

A




L. H. one octave lower

Other fingerings $\frac{4}{3}-\frac{5}{4}$

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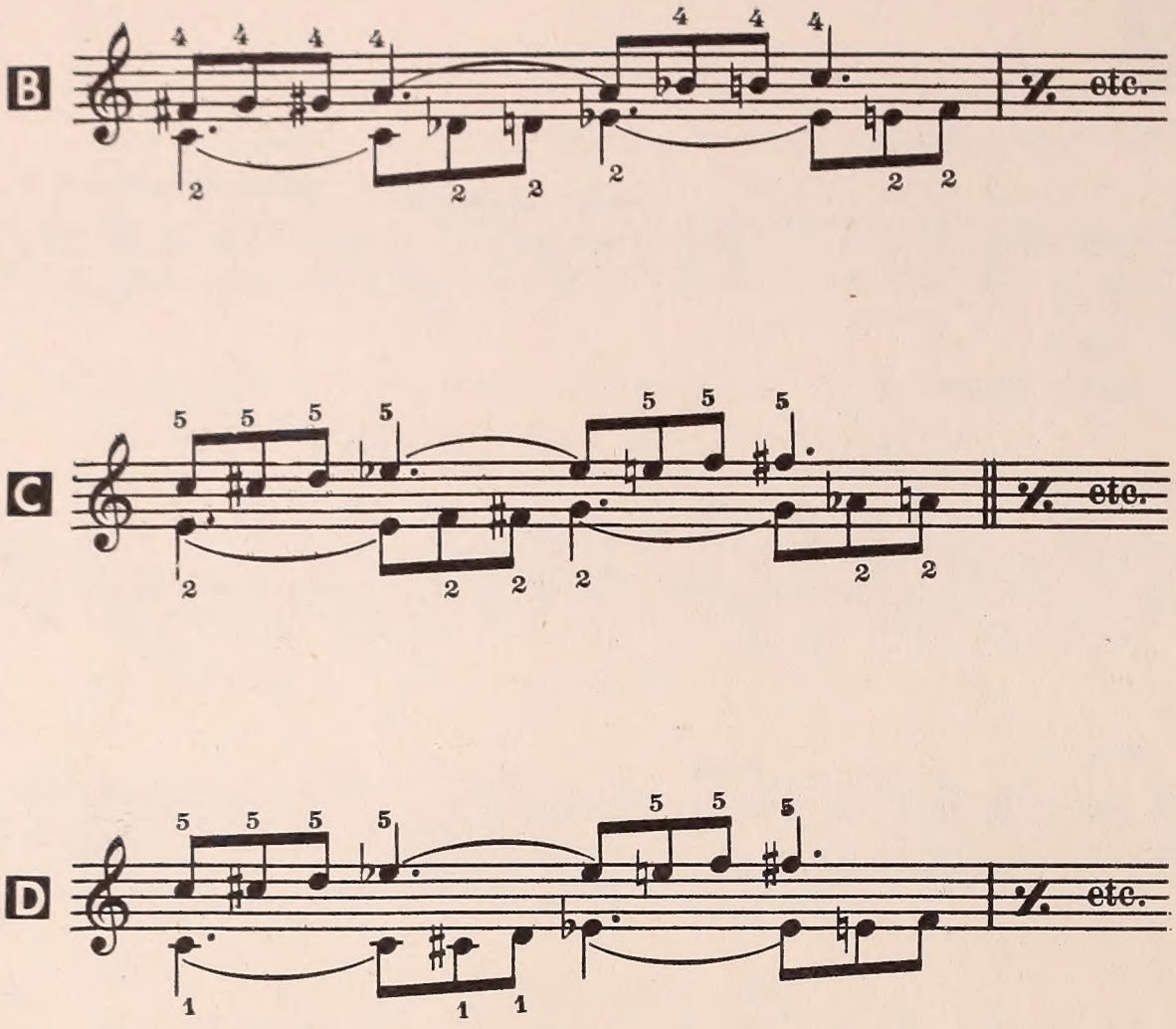
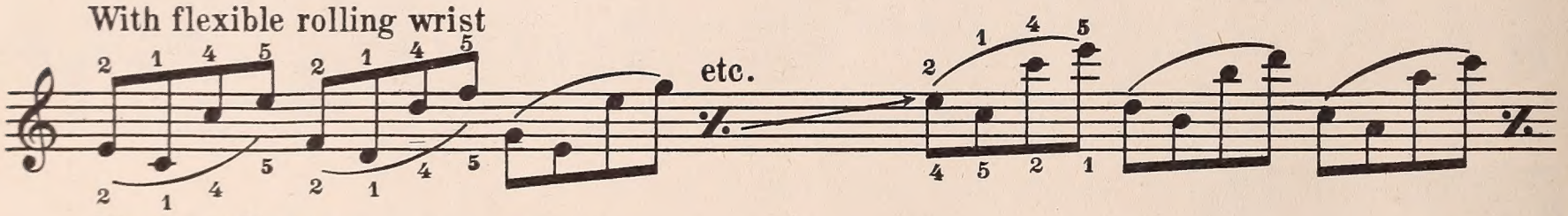
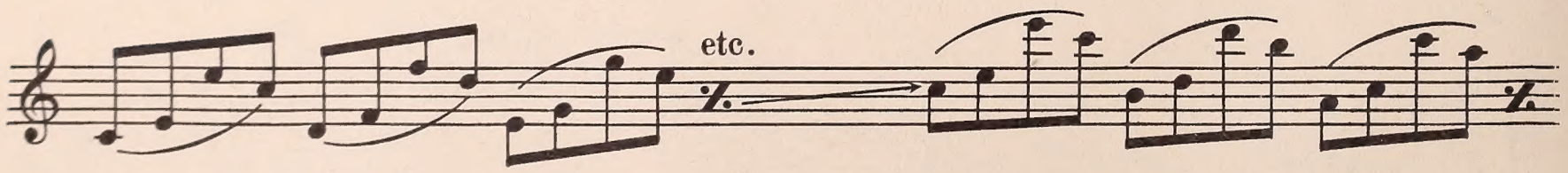


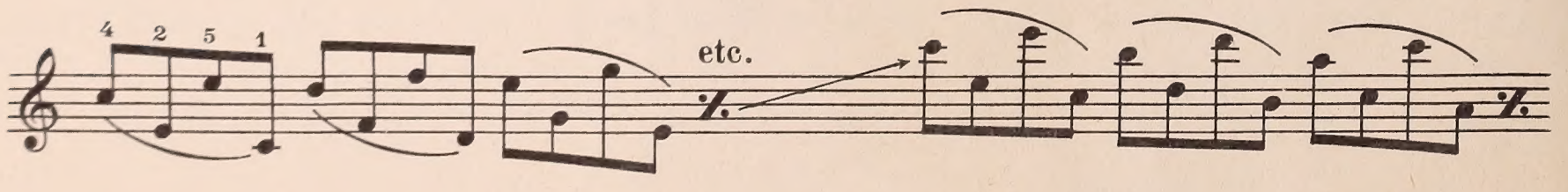

## Example III

With flexible rolling wrist




The Left Hand two octaves lower



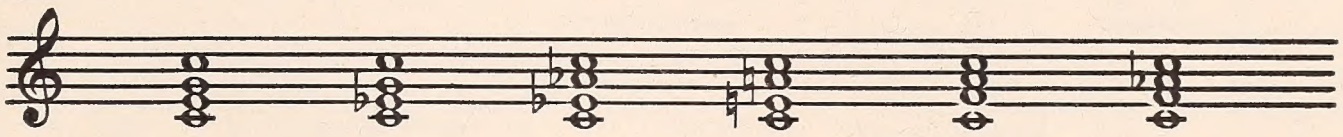



# Example IV

Those persons who have small hands must be especially careful in practicing extensions, and not sustain notes which make the stretch too difficult.

## STEP I

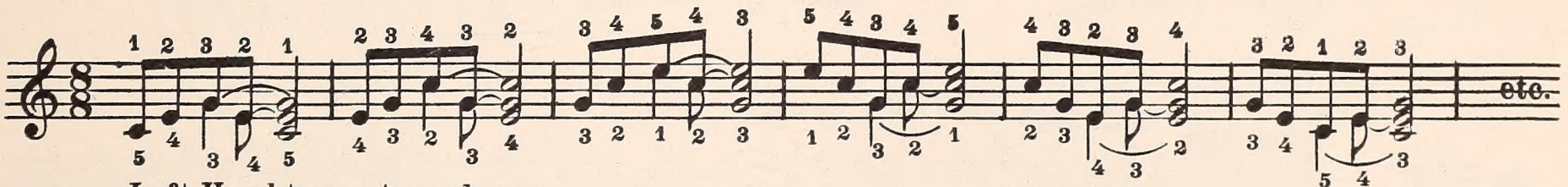
PRACTICE THESE SIX CHORDS IN ALL KEYS



## STEP II

Play the following exercises slowly, emphasize the action of each finger, keeping the wrist low; while holding the half-notes at the end of each measure, control the flexibility of the wrist by moving it up and down.

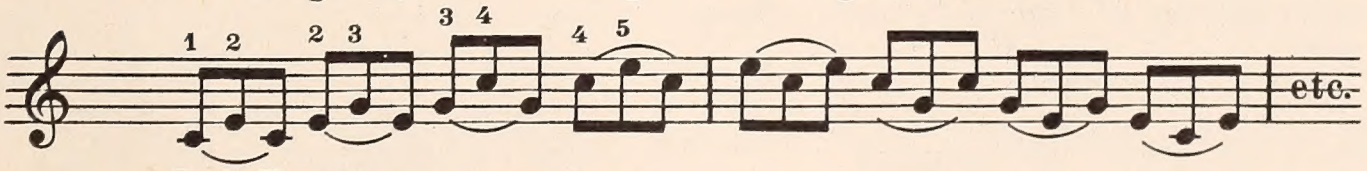
PLAY THIS EXERCISE ON THE SIX GIVEN CHORDS




Left Hand two octaves lower

Faster, lighter, exact raising of each finger, flexible wrist

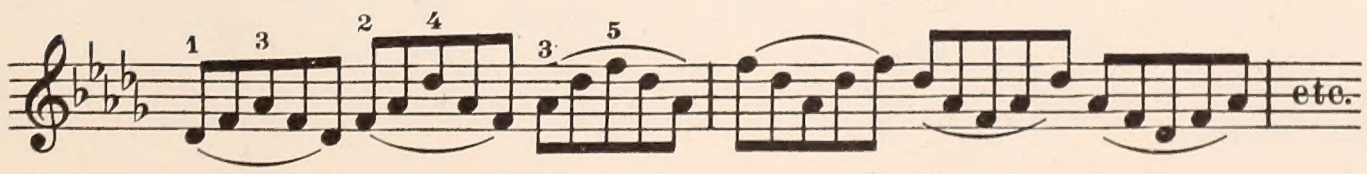
A




On all six chords

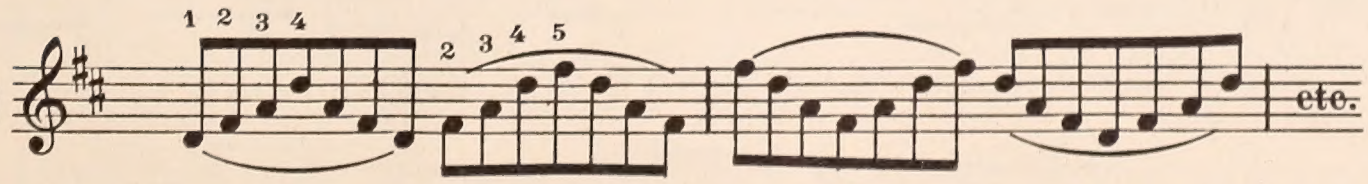
Left Hand two octaves lower

B




On all six chords

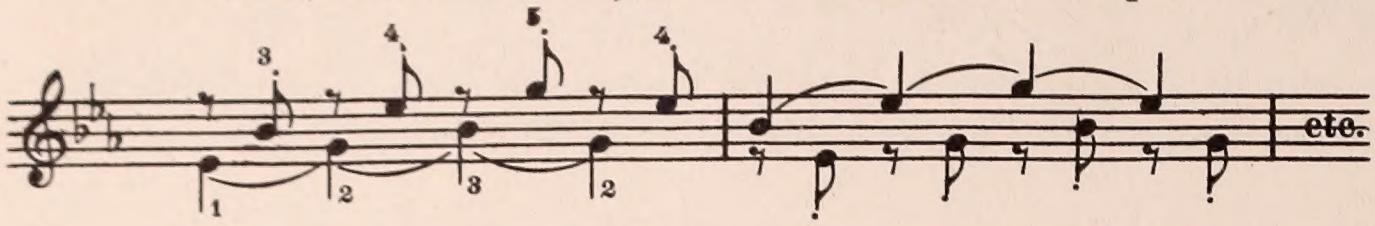
C




On all six chords

Slower, after the stretch, the hand resumes its normal position

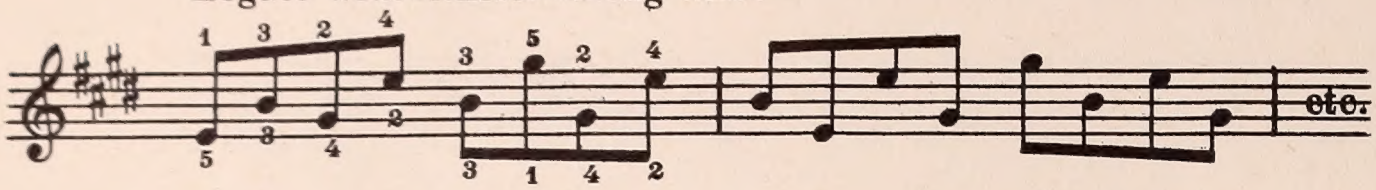
D




on all six chords

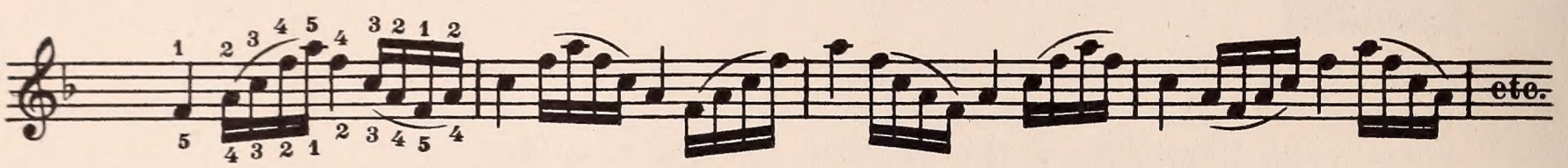
Legato with flexible rolling wrist

E

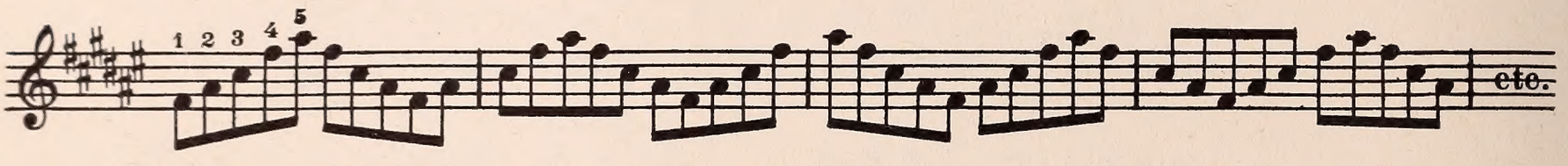



on all six chords

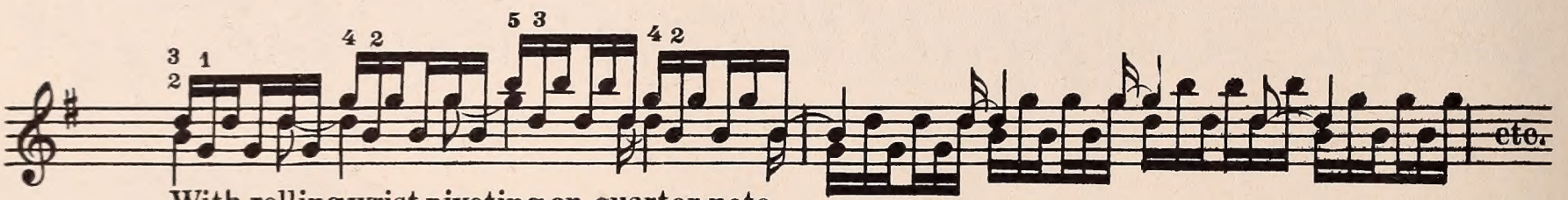
F




G




H

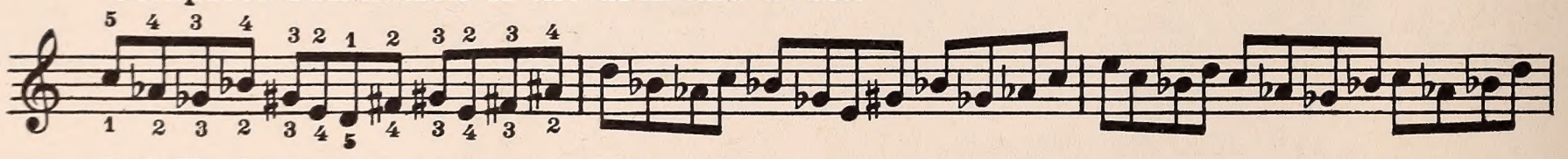



With rolling wrist, pivoting on quarter note

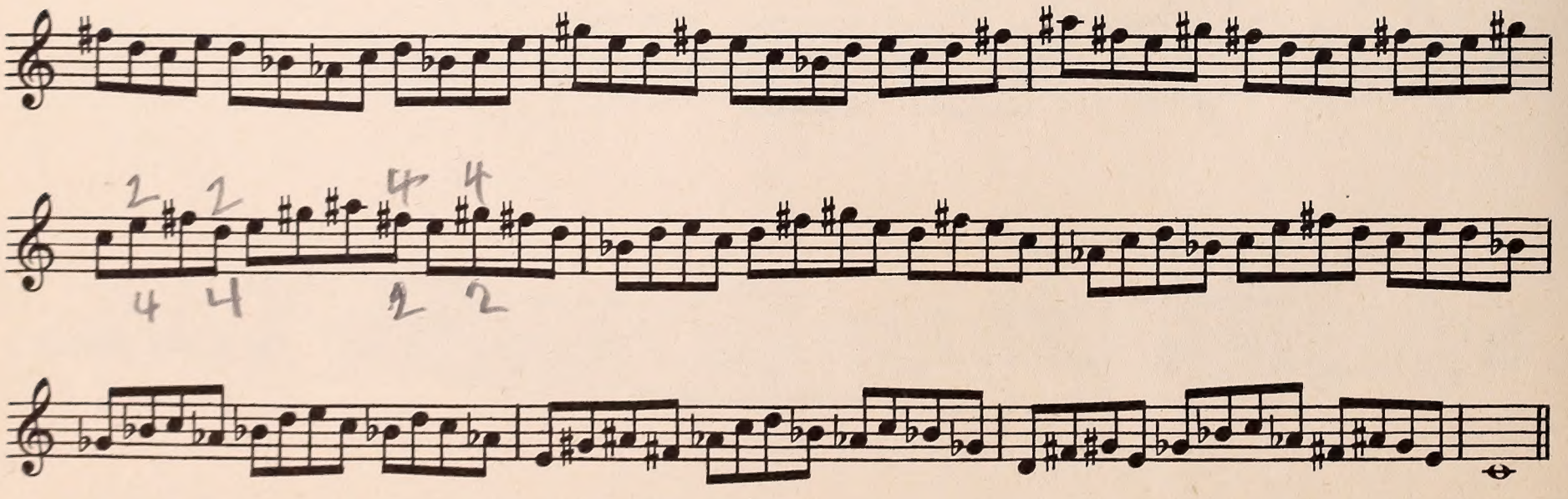
## Example V

Legatissimo, slow and mezzo forte, holding all notes of each measure, raising only one finger with a quiet movement, always controlling the complete relaxation of the arm and wrist.

A



Left Hand two octaves lower



Leggiero, fast, piano, without holding any notes

B

L. H. two octaves lower

C

## Example VI

A

Twice

Four times

Four times

L. H. two octaves lower

B

Slowly

turn

L. H. always two octaves lower

C

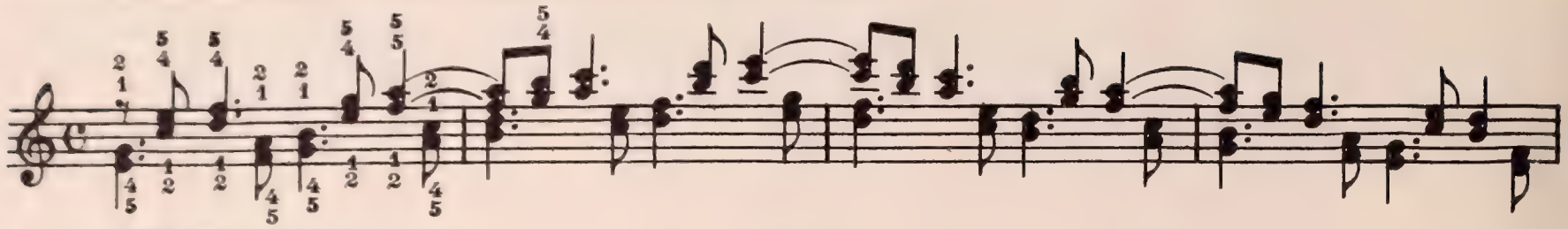
Leggiero

D

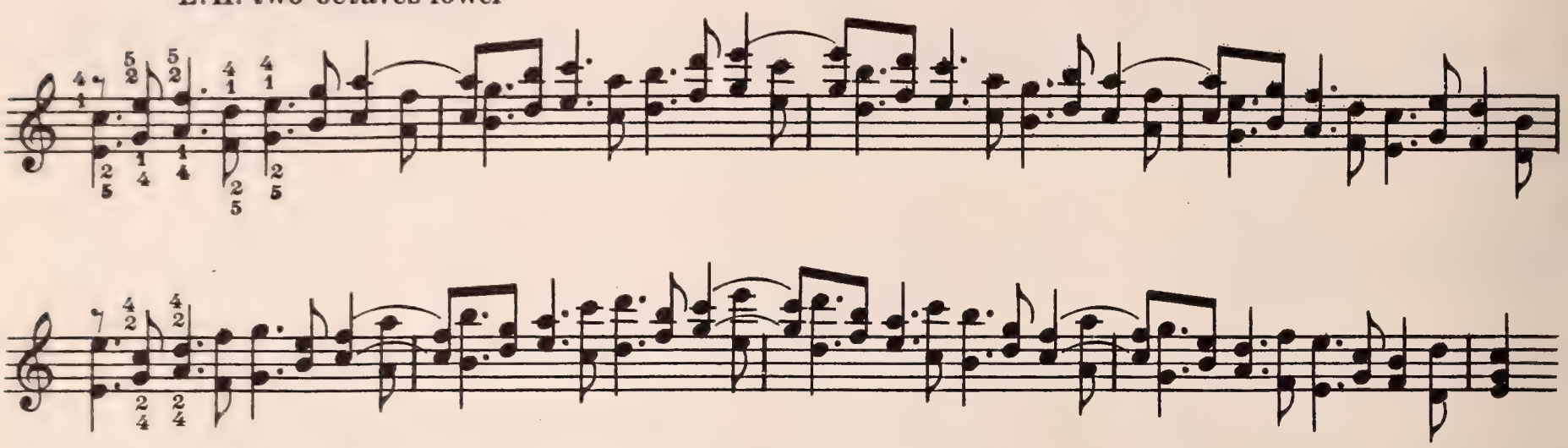
Slow, legato

## Example VII

If the extension is too difficult, hold only one finger

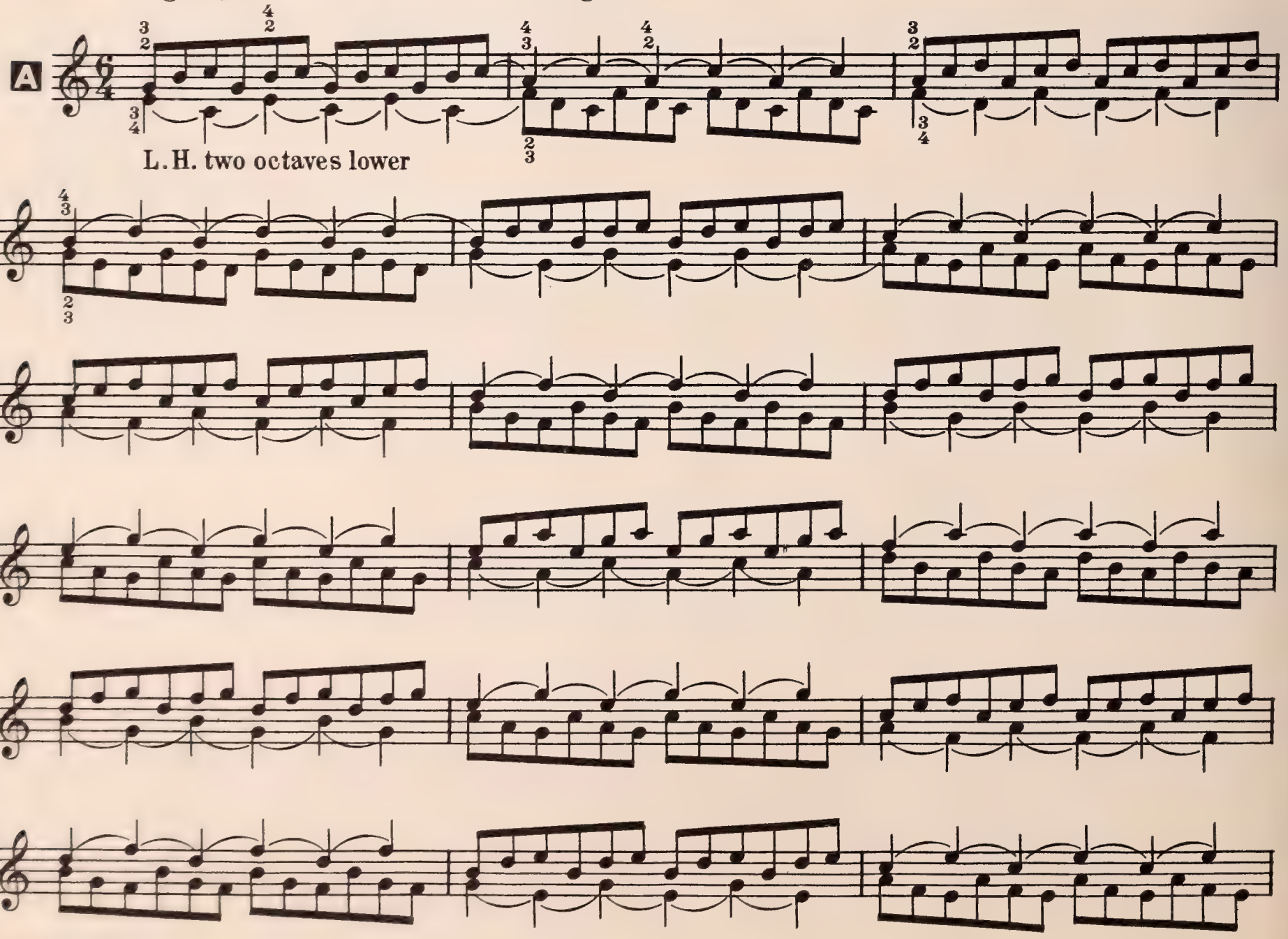


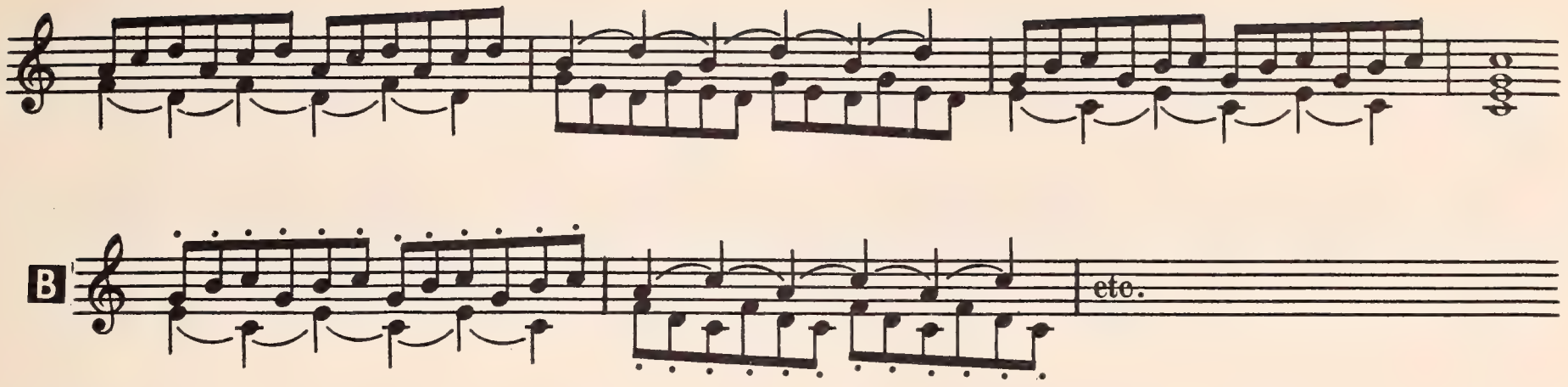
L. H. two octaves lower



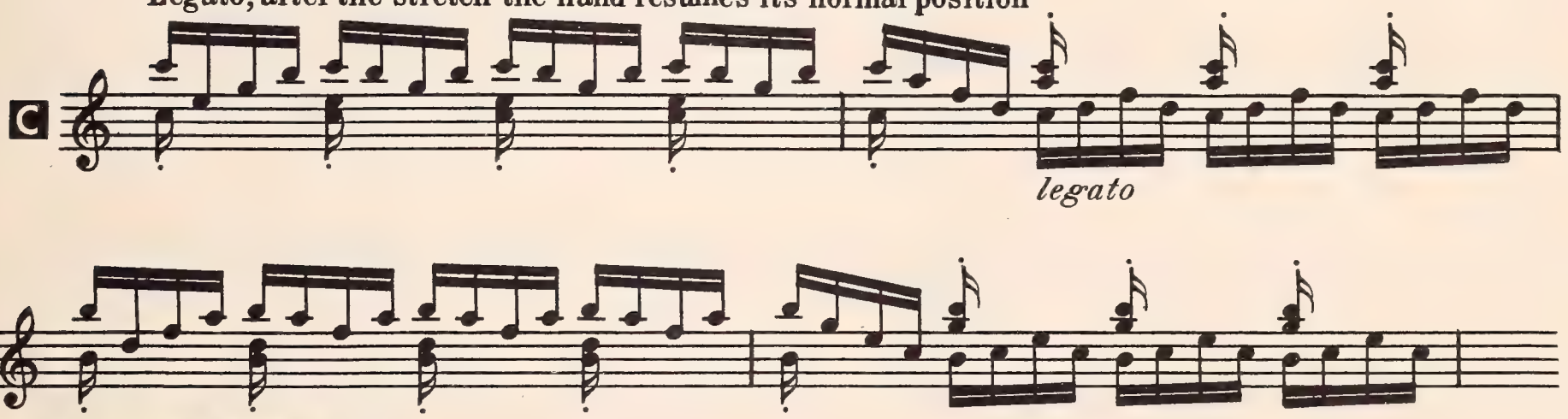
## Example VIII

Legato, wrist flexible, both voices legato



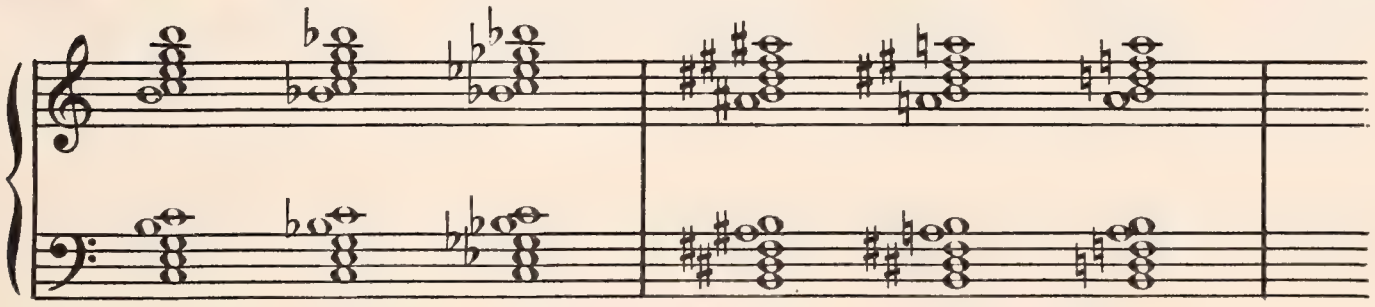



Legato; after the stretch the hand resumes its normal position

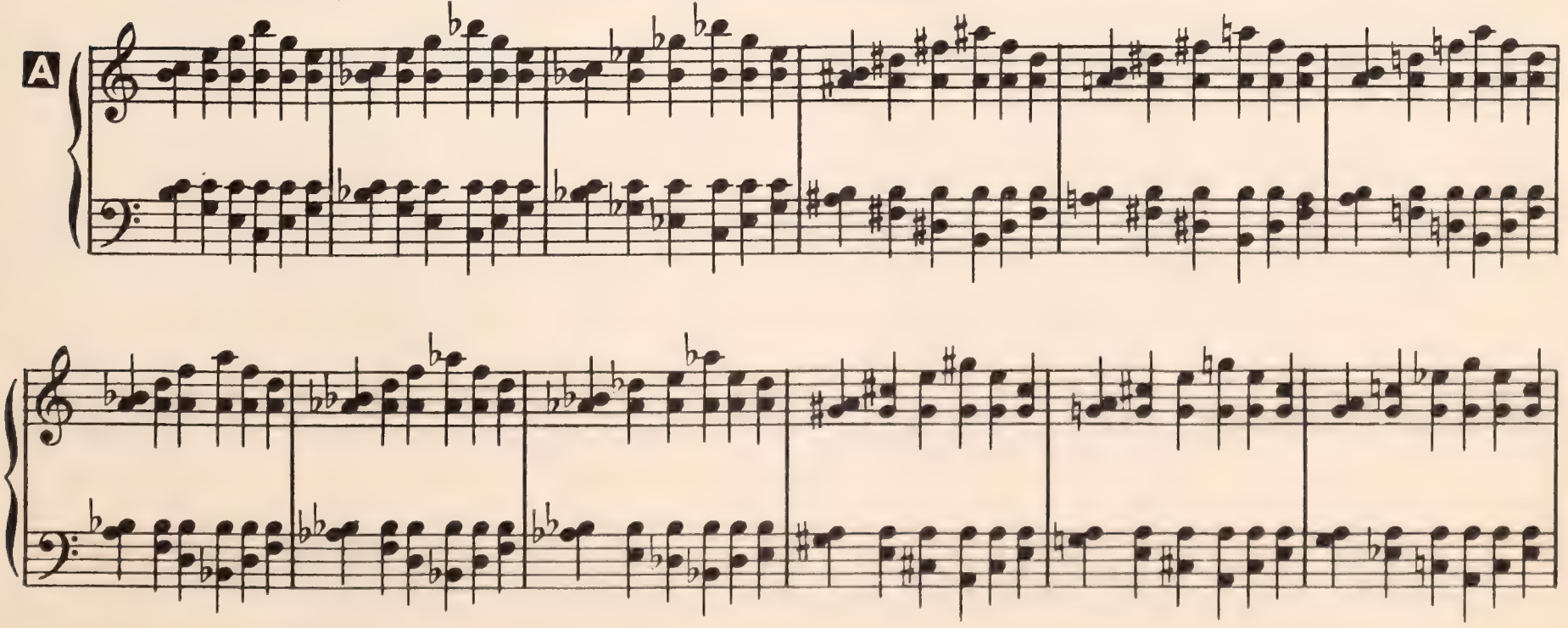



## Example IX

First, practice the following group of three chords in chromatic sequence



Legatissimo, slow, holding all the notes of each measure



B

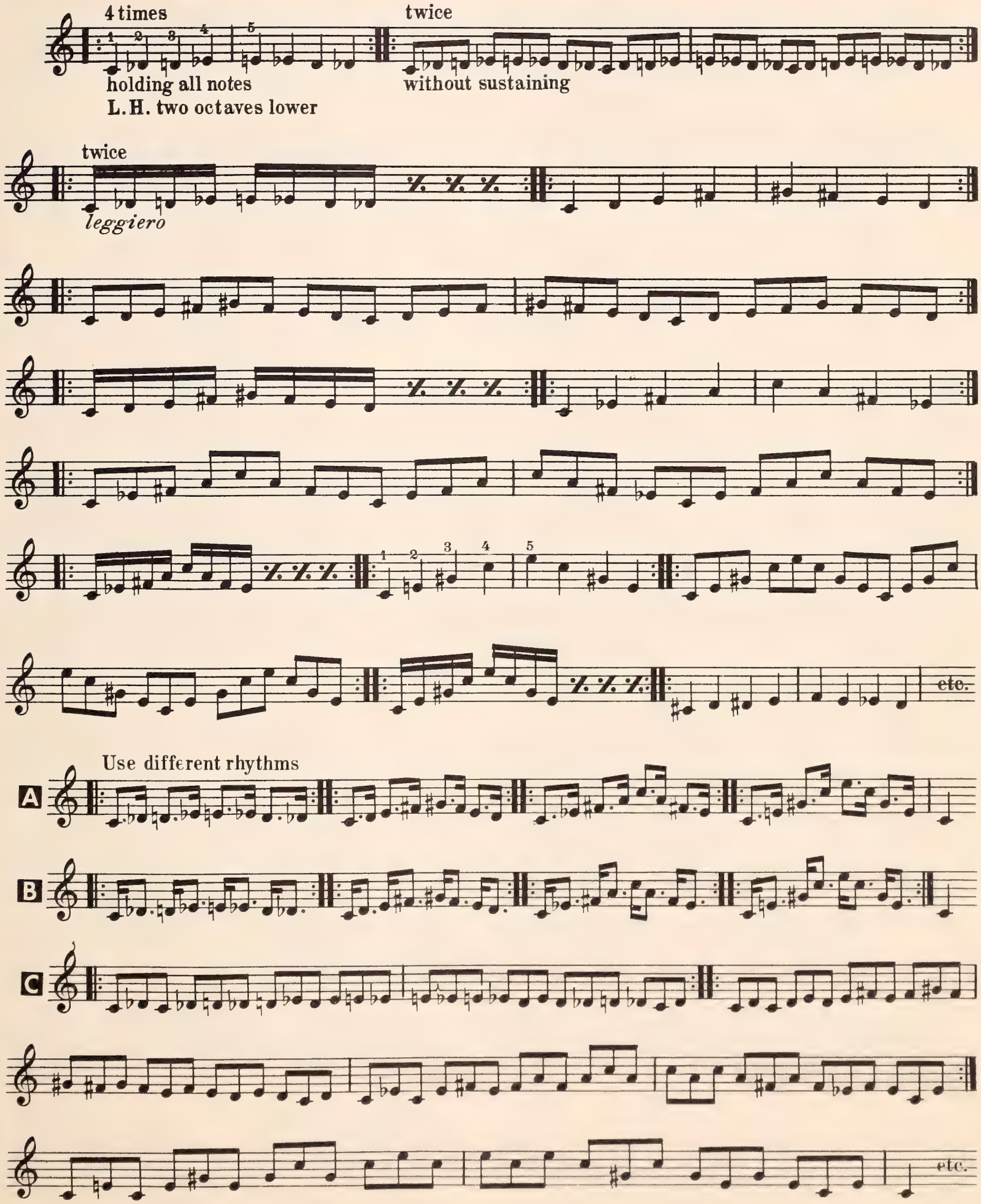
etc.

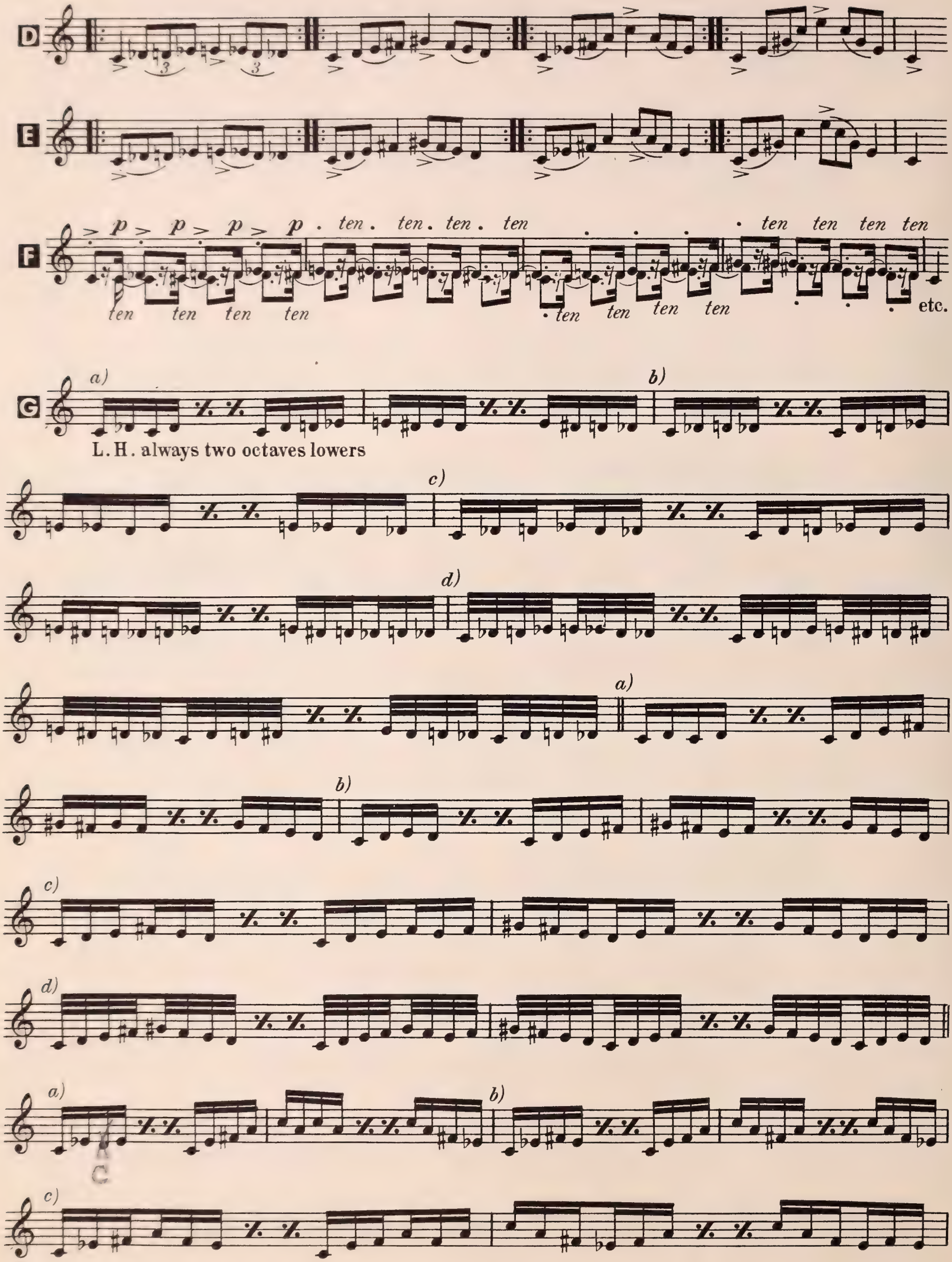
C

# SECTION II - FIVE FINGER EXERCISES



## Example I




D
E
F
p p p p . ten . ten . ten . ten . ten ten ten ten
ten ten ten ten . ten ten ten ten etc.
G
a)
b)
L. H. always two octaves lowers
c)
d)
a)
b)
c)
d)
a)
b)
C
c)

d)

a)

b)

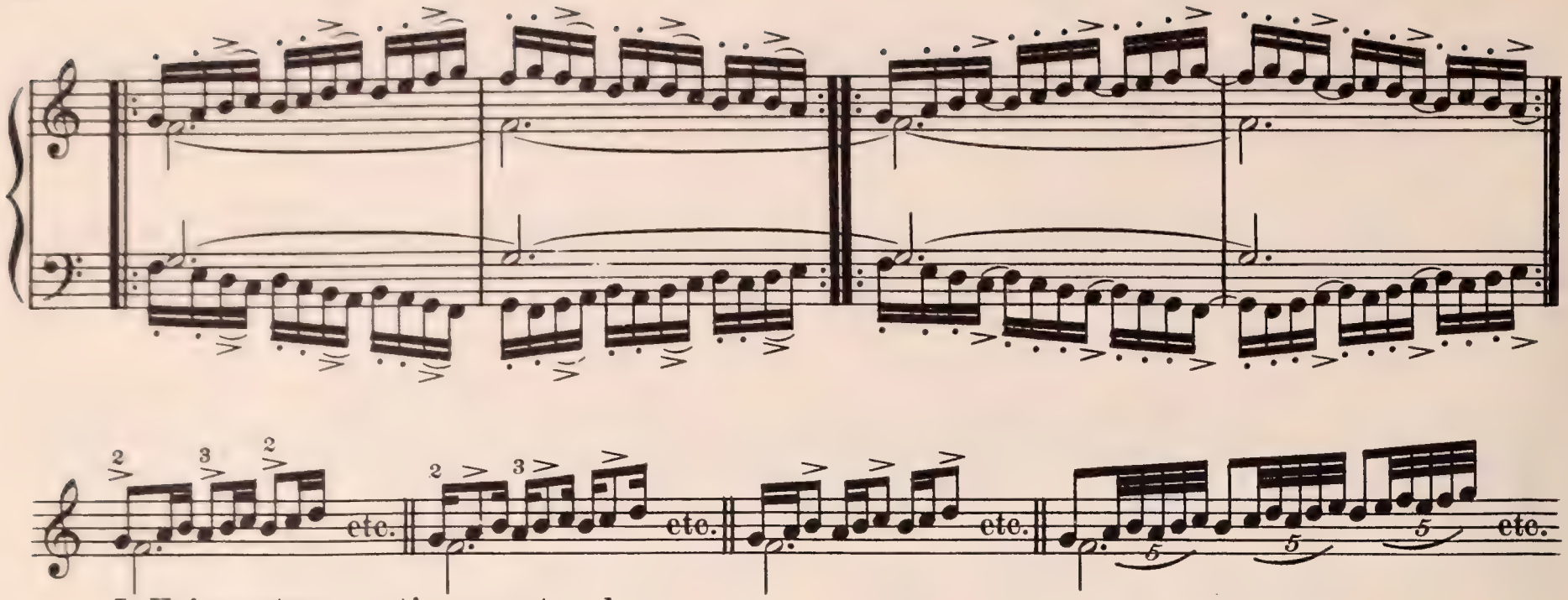
c)

d)

## Example 11

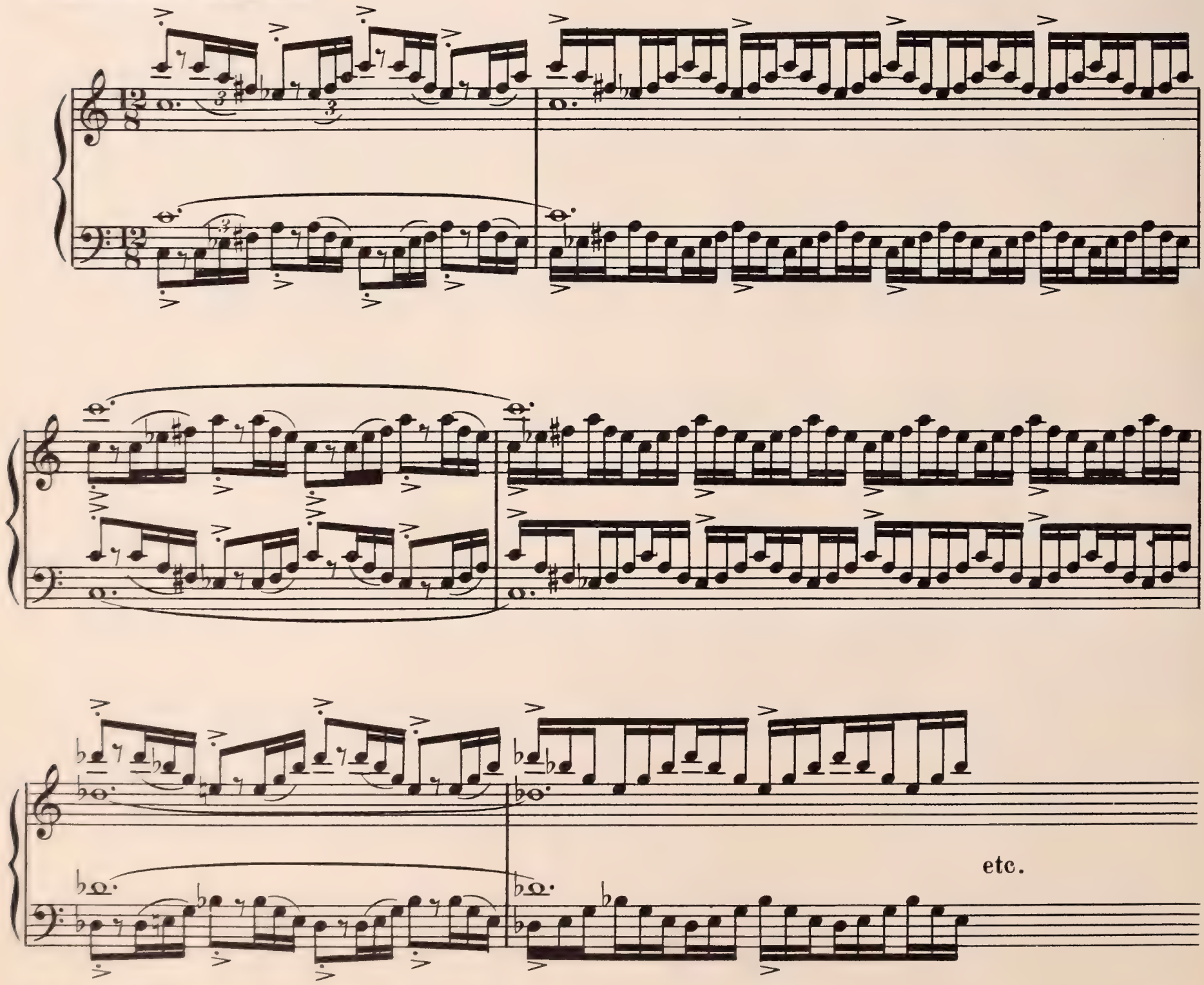
etc.

Varying accents



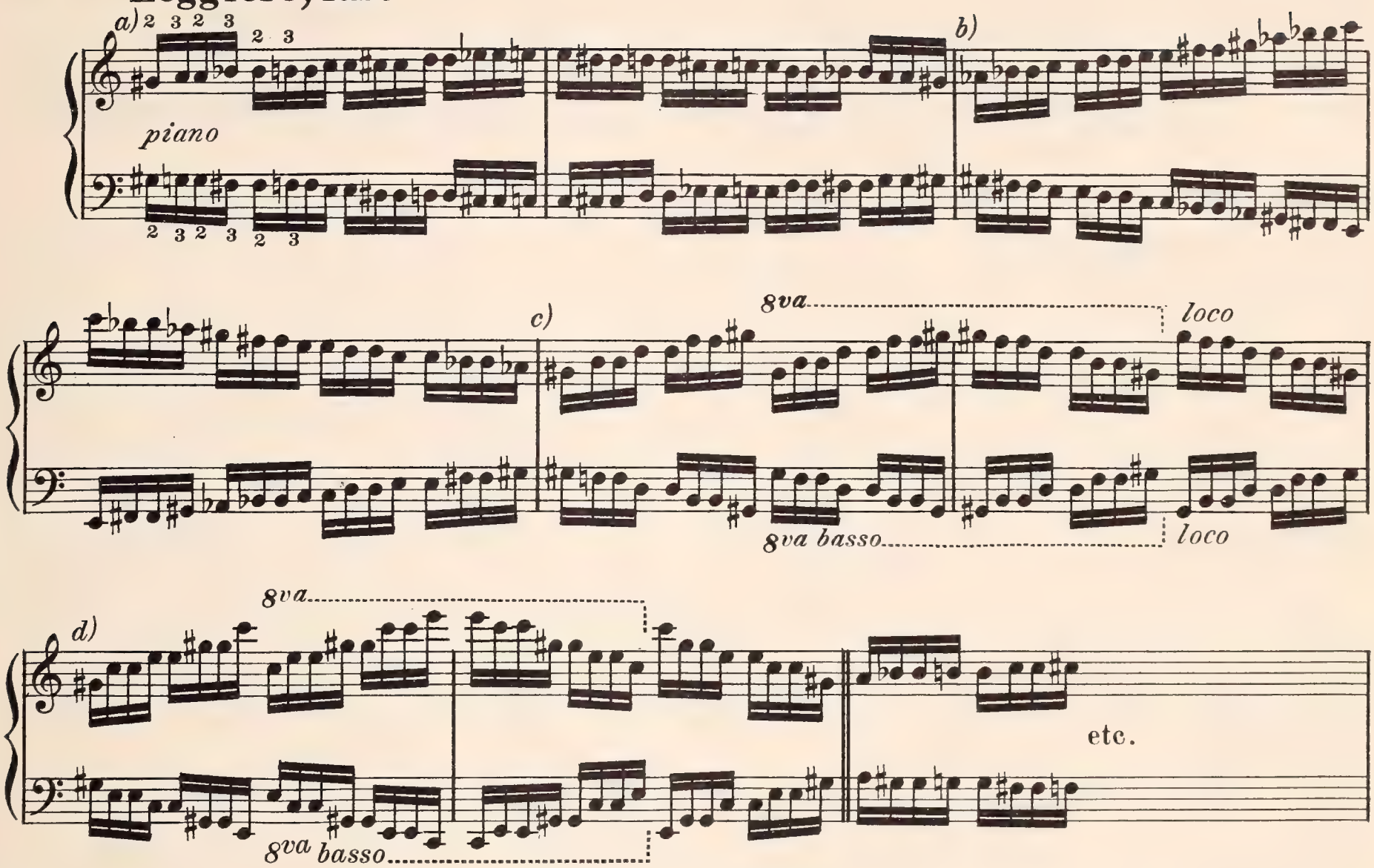

L. H. in contrary motion an octave lower

## Example III



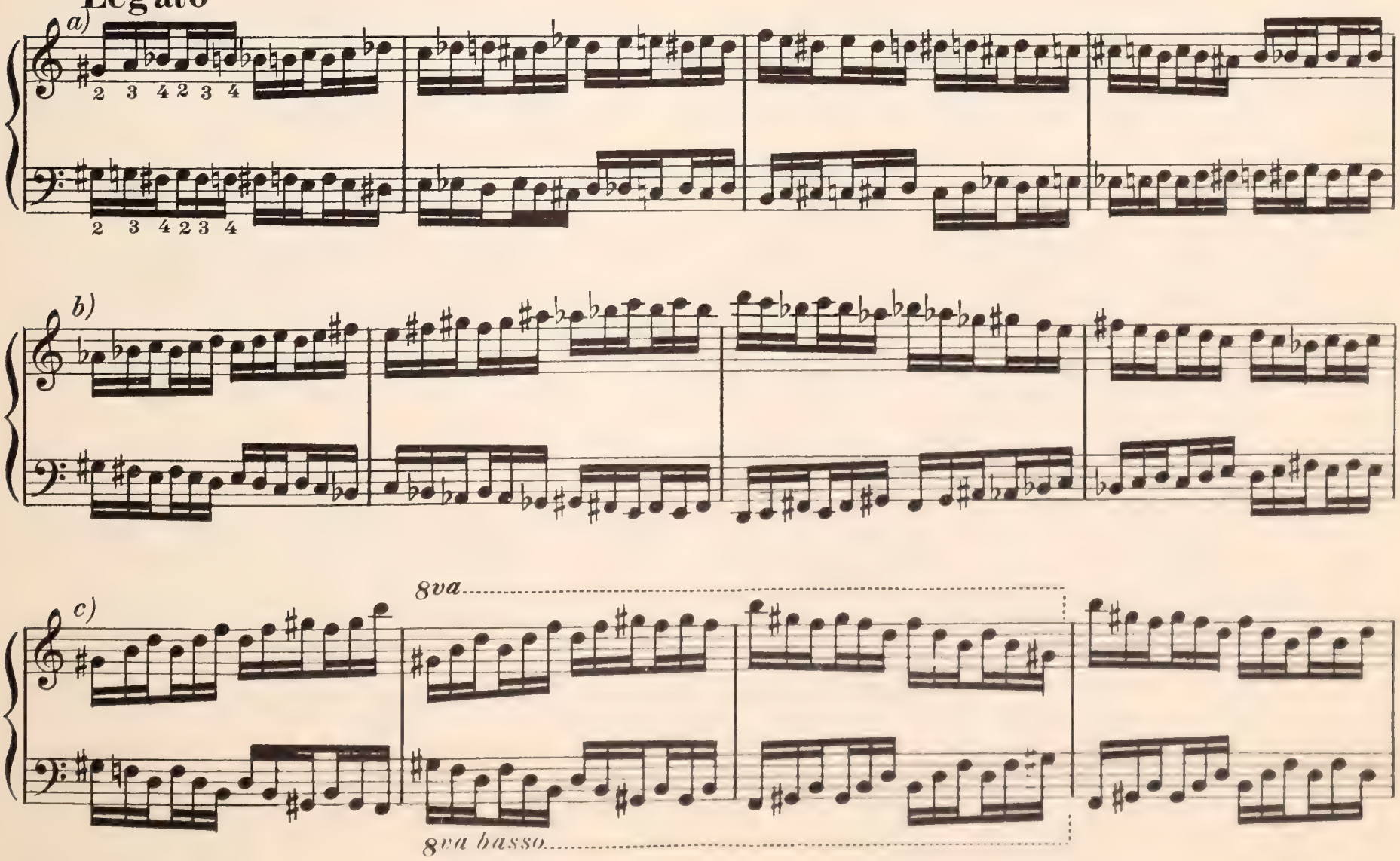
# Example IV

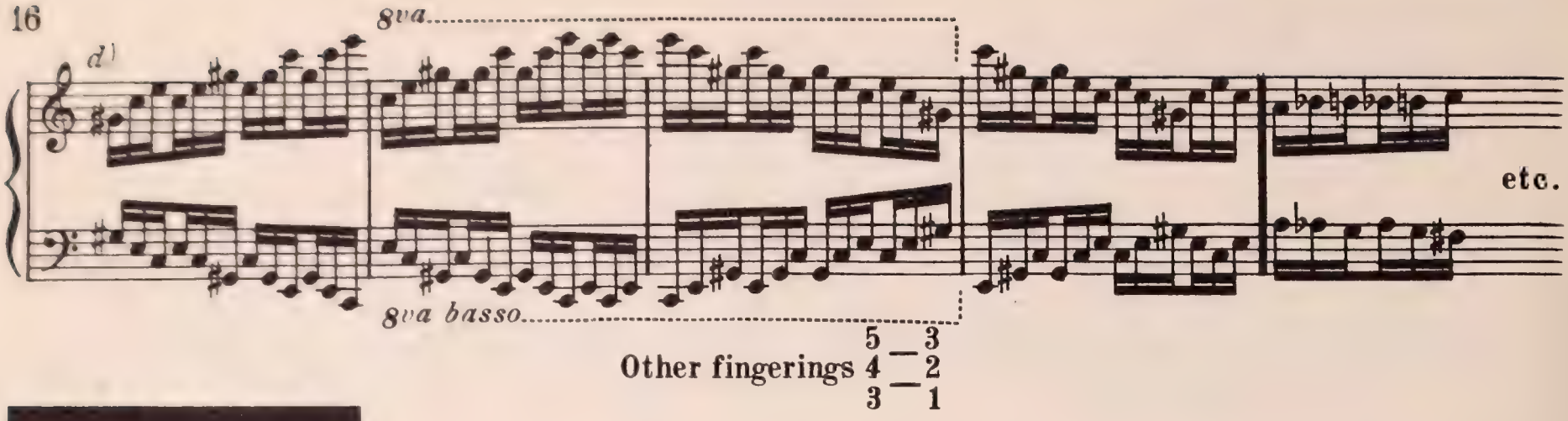
**Leggiero, fast**




Other fingering $\begin{matrix}4\\3\end{matrix}-\begin{matrix}5\\4\end{matrix}-\begin{matrix}2\\1\end{matrix}$

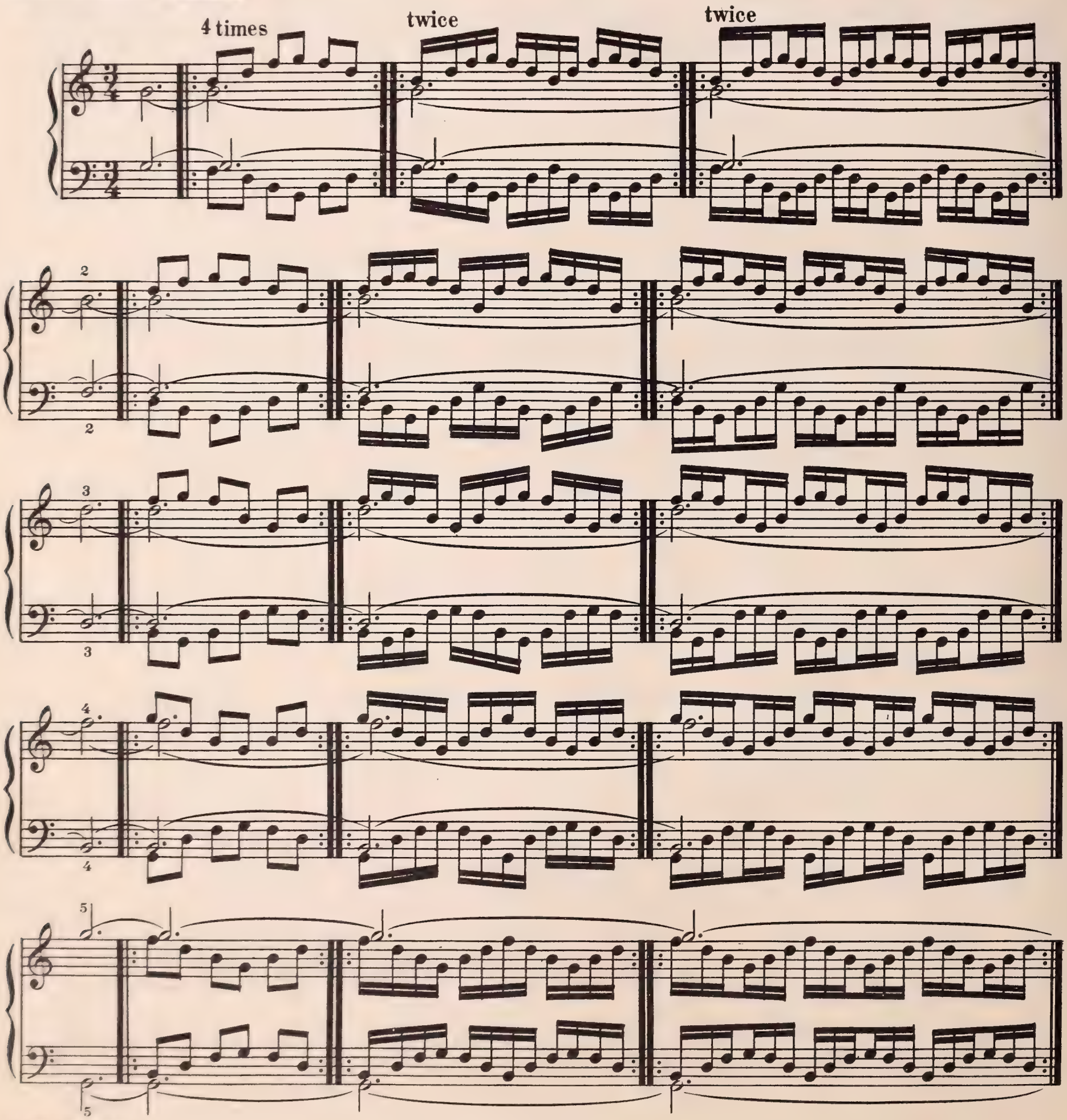
**Legato**

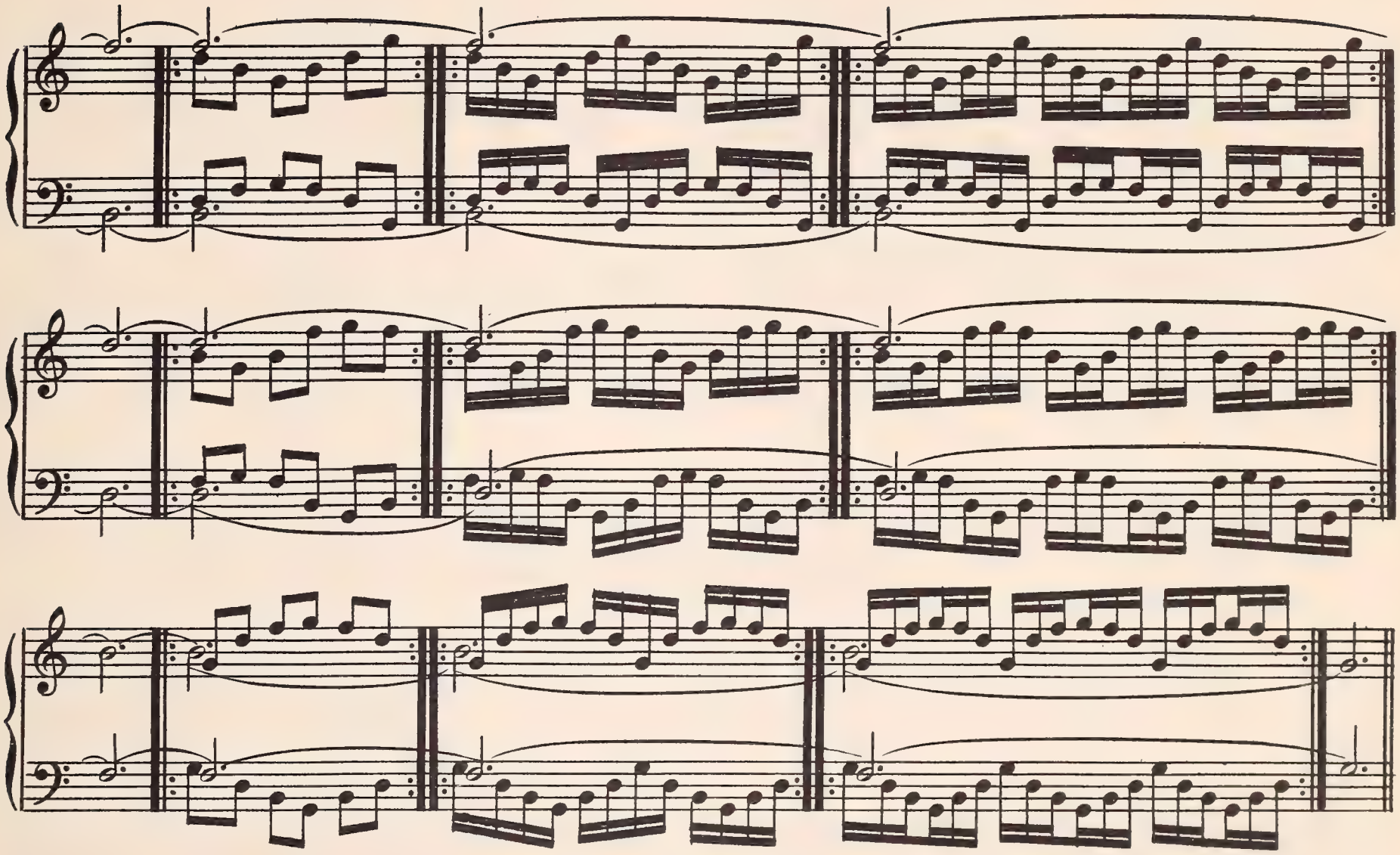





Other fingerings $\frac{5}{4}\frac{3}{2}\frac{}{}\frac{}{}\frac{3}{}\frac{1}{}$

## Example V





# SECTION III - PASSAGE of the THUMB

**Example I** First practice legatissimo, slow, holding three notes, then leggiero, fast without holding

A

L.H. one octave lower

Other fingerings $\frac{4}{3}1-\frac{5}{4}1$

B

C

Also in groups of six

and

In groups of eight

etc.

etc.

D

In all keys

etc

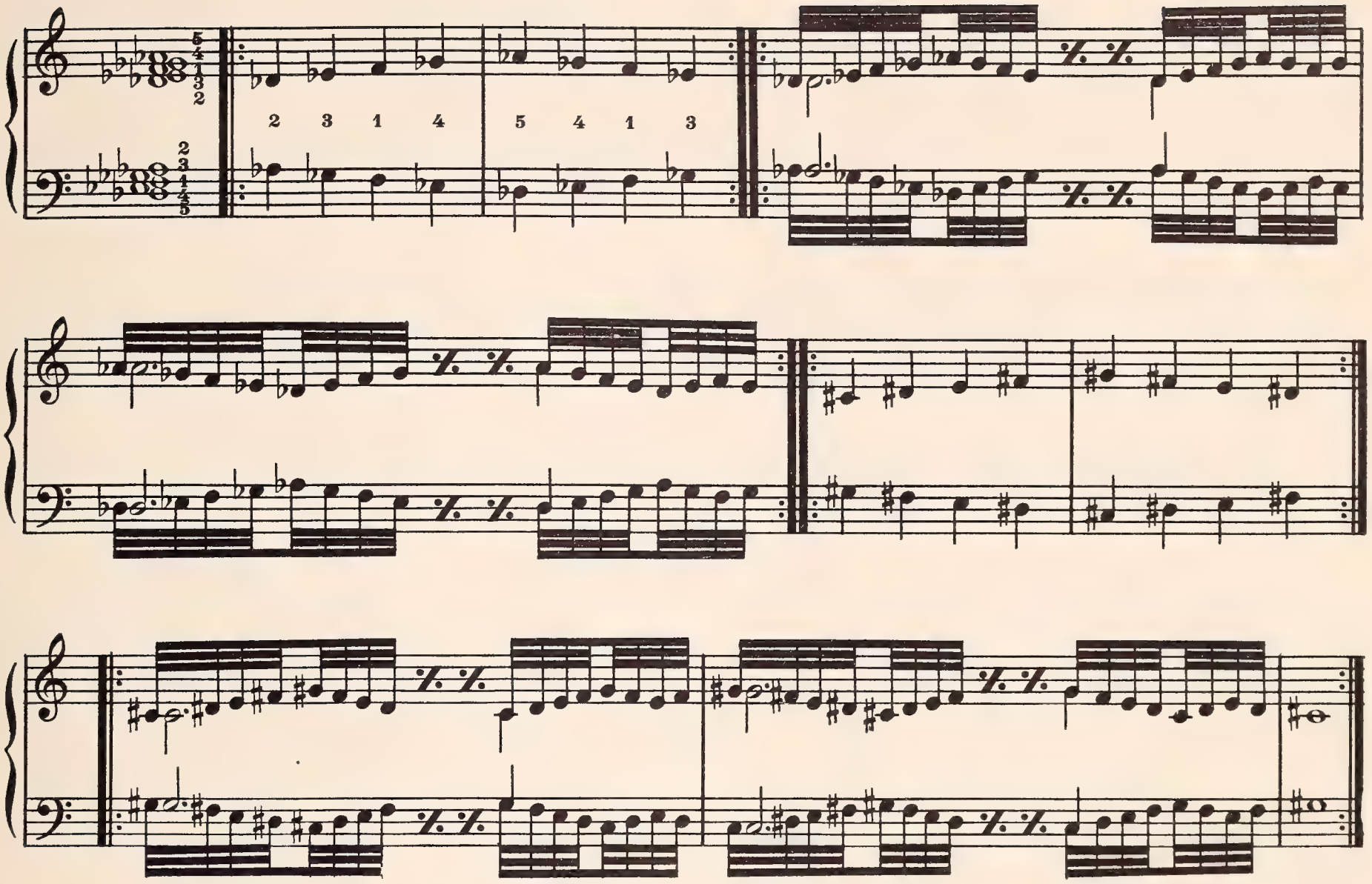
## Example 11

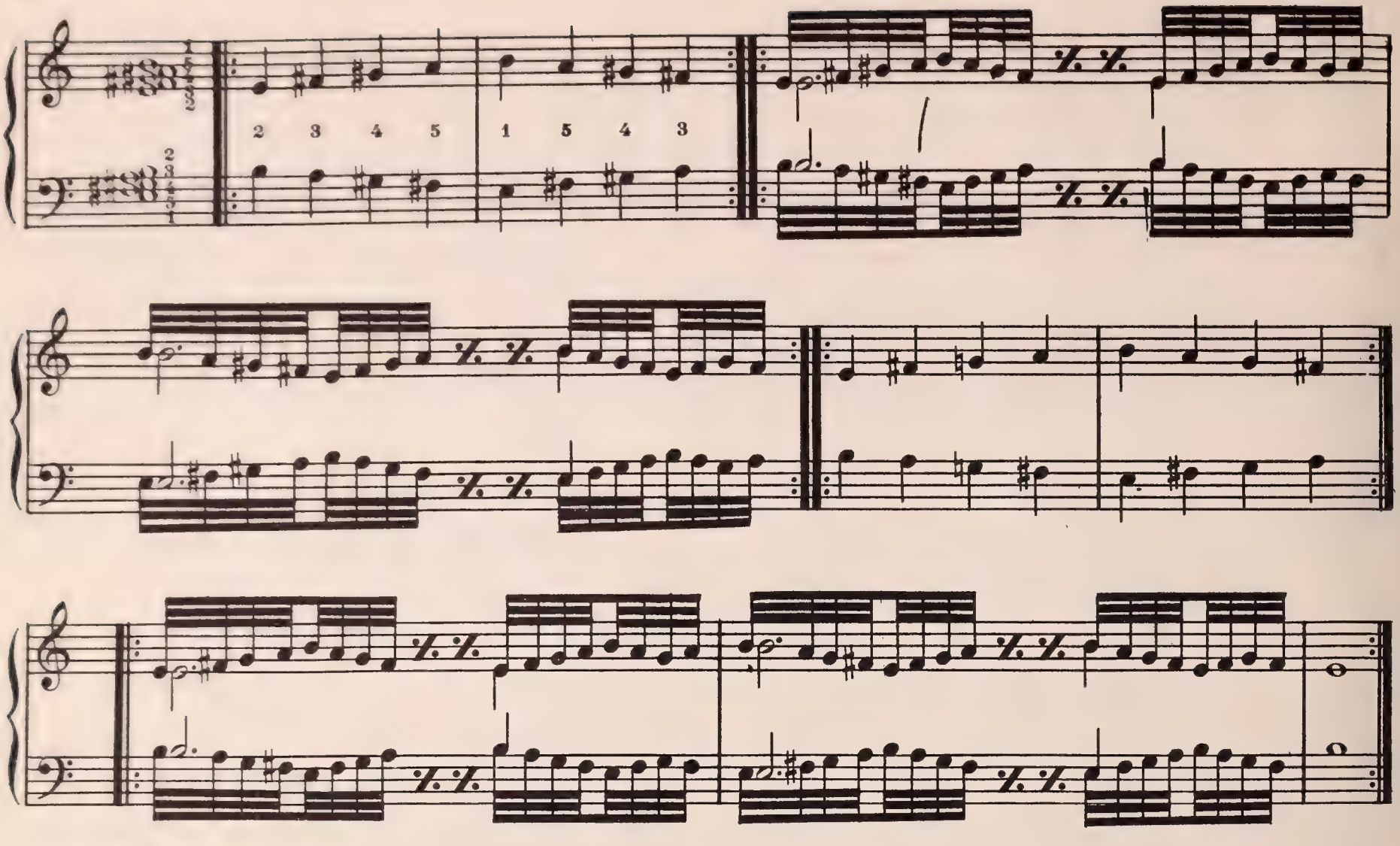
ten

Holding notes

Holding 2nd fingers only

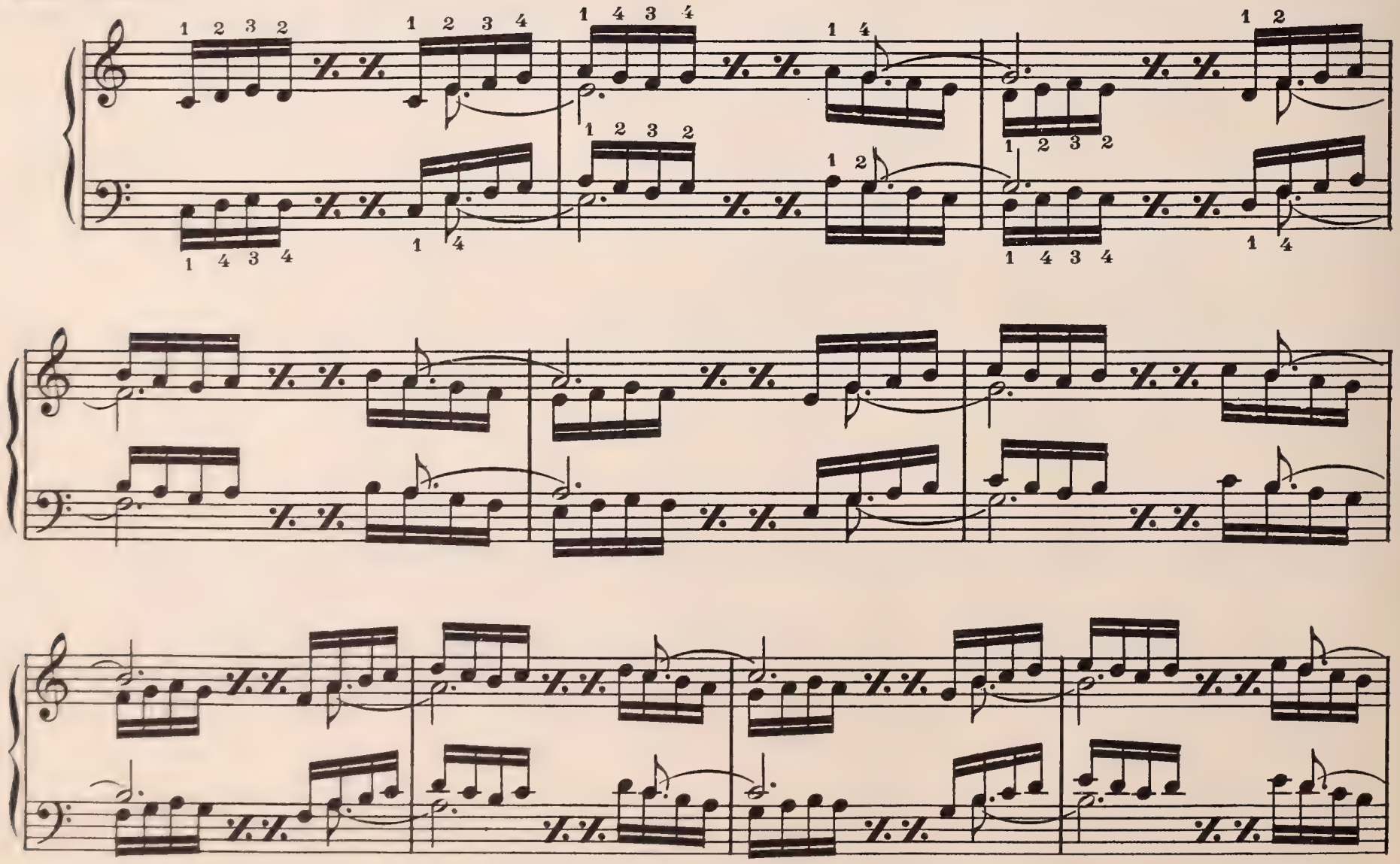
Holding 5th fingers only


2 3 1 4
5 4 1 3
2 3 4 1
5 1 4 3



## Example III

After Hanon



etc.

R.H.

L.H.

## Example IV

R.H.

A

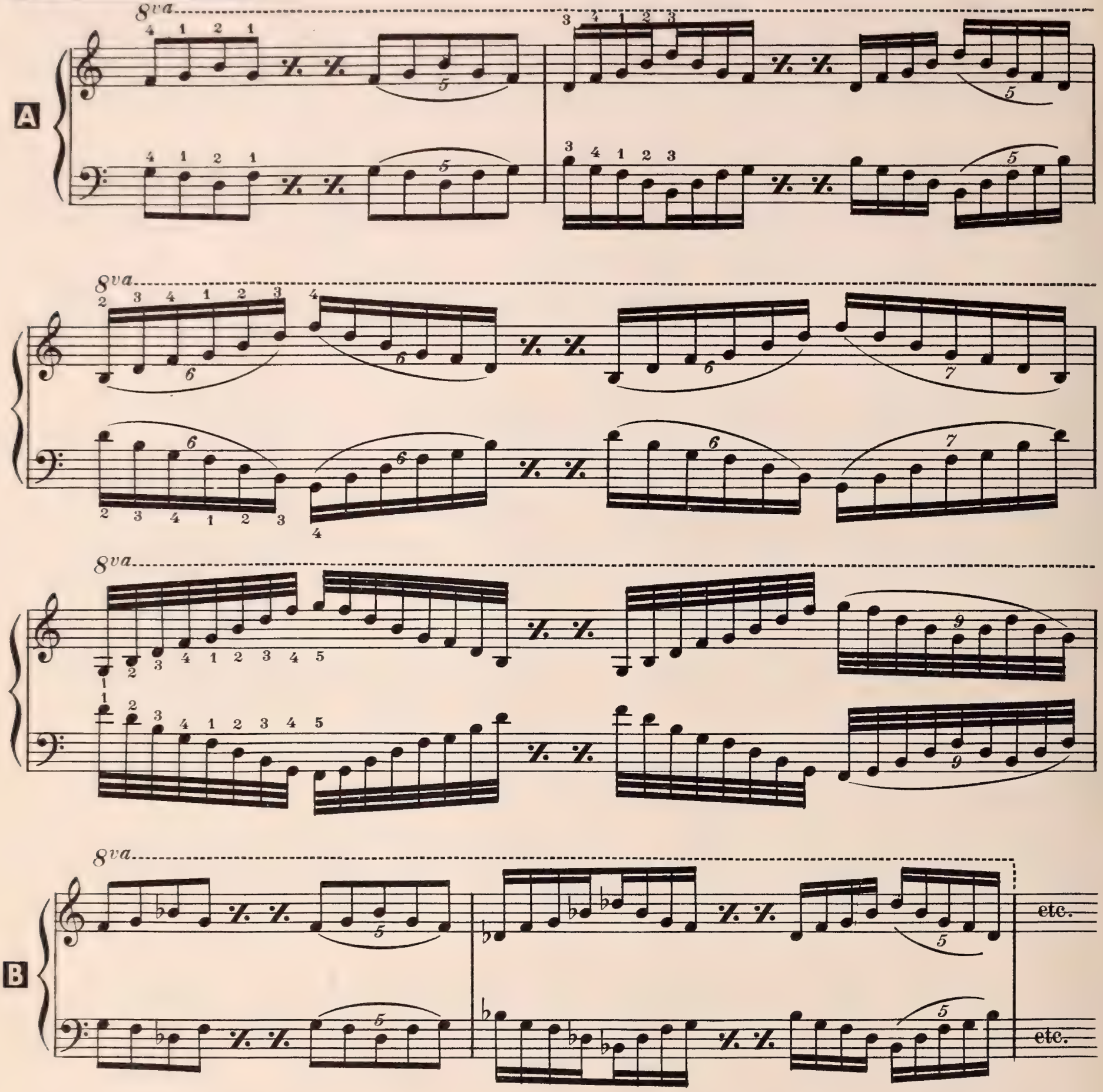
L.H. L.H. one octave lower

B

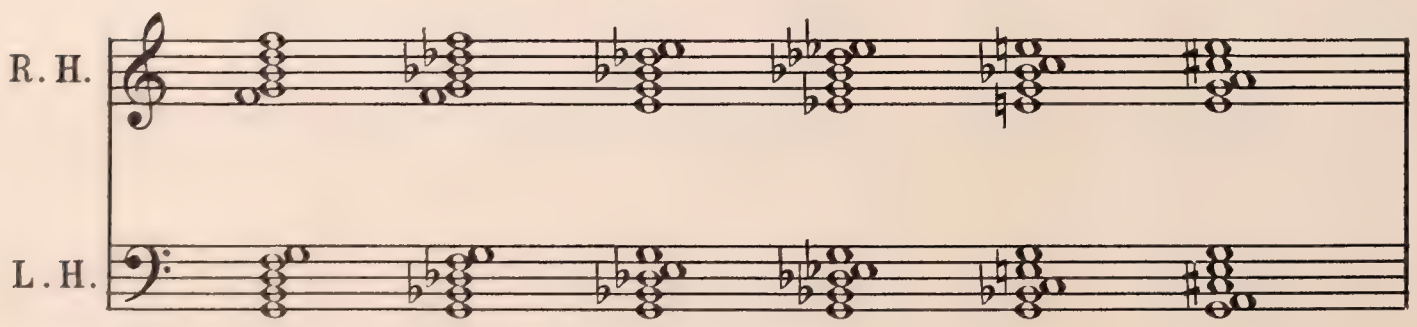
C

etc.

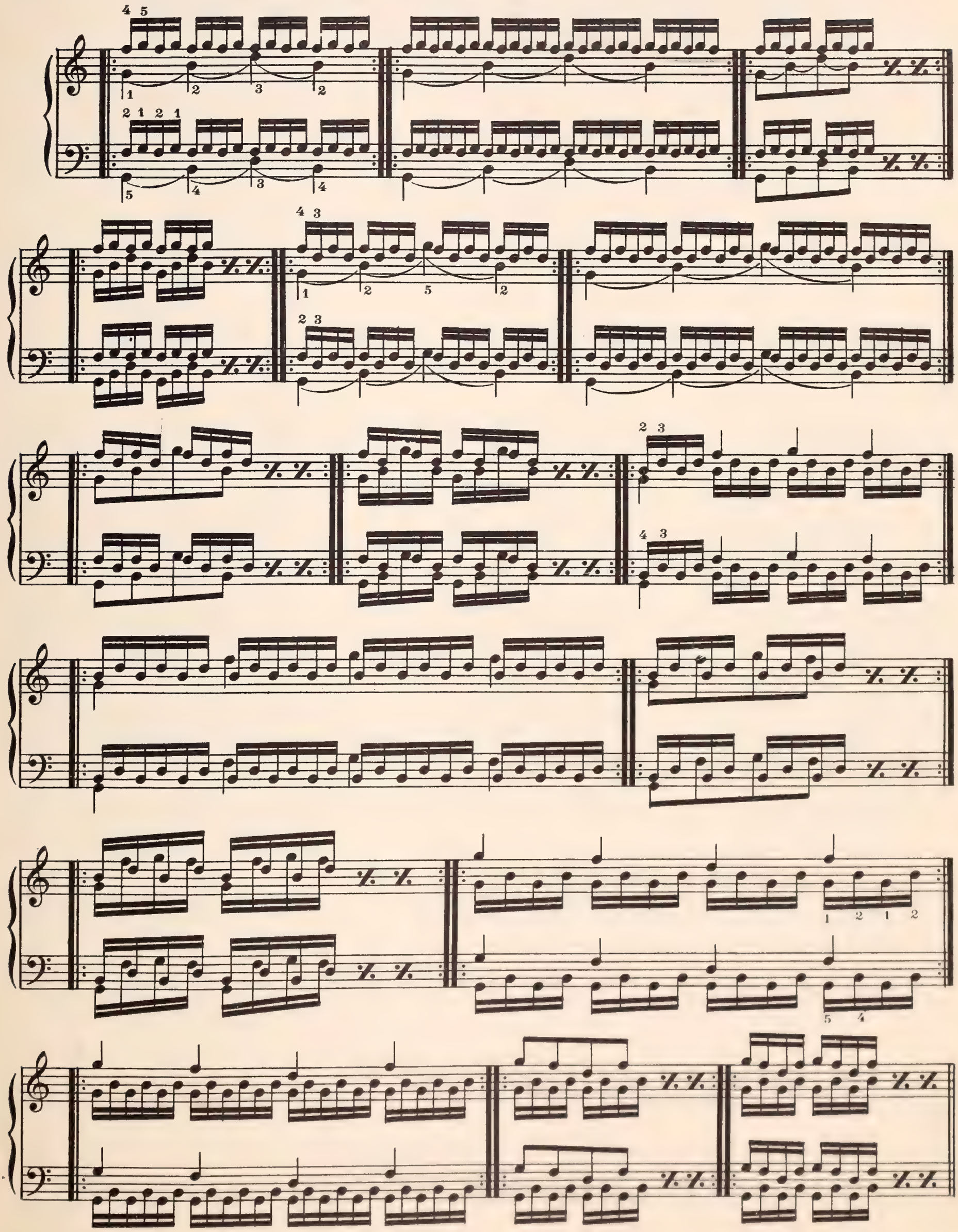
# Example V



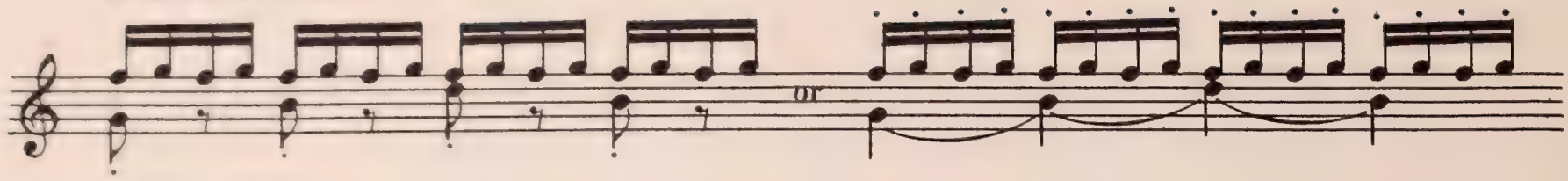

Play the above exercise on the following six chords



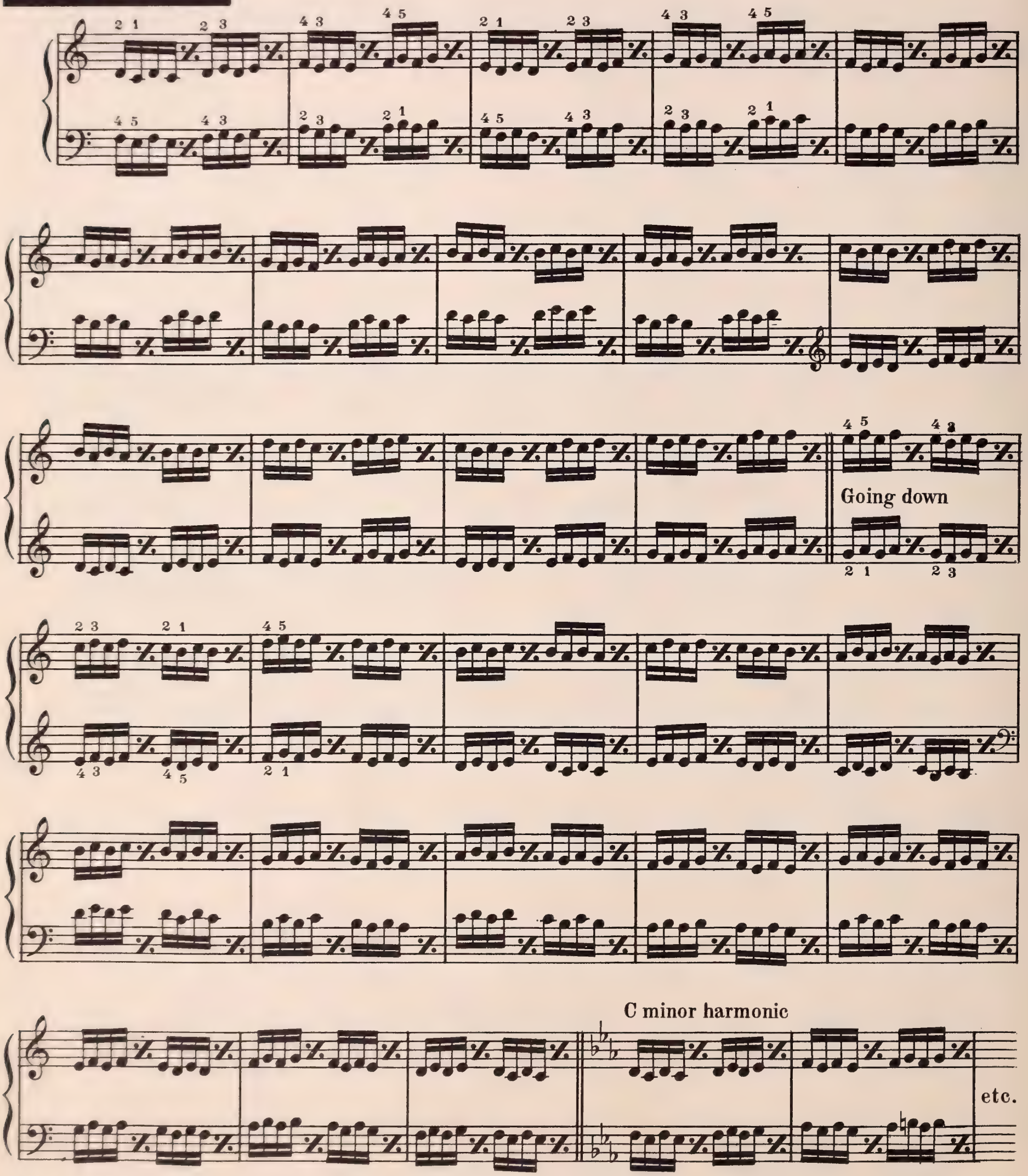
# SECTION IV - TRILL STUDIES



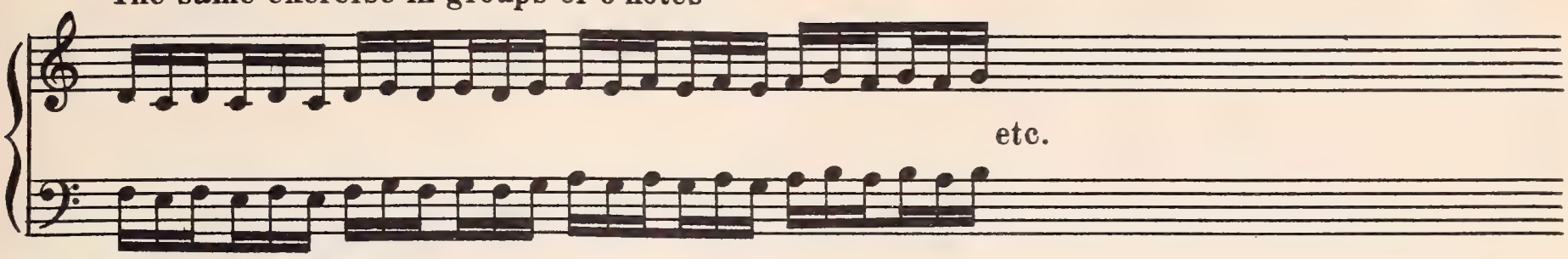
Different touches



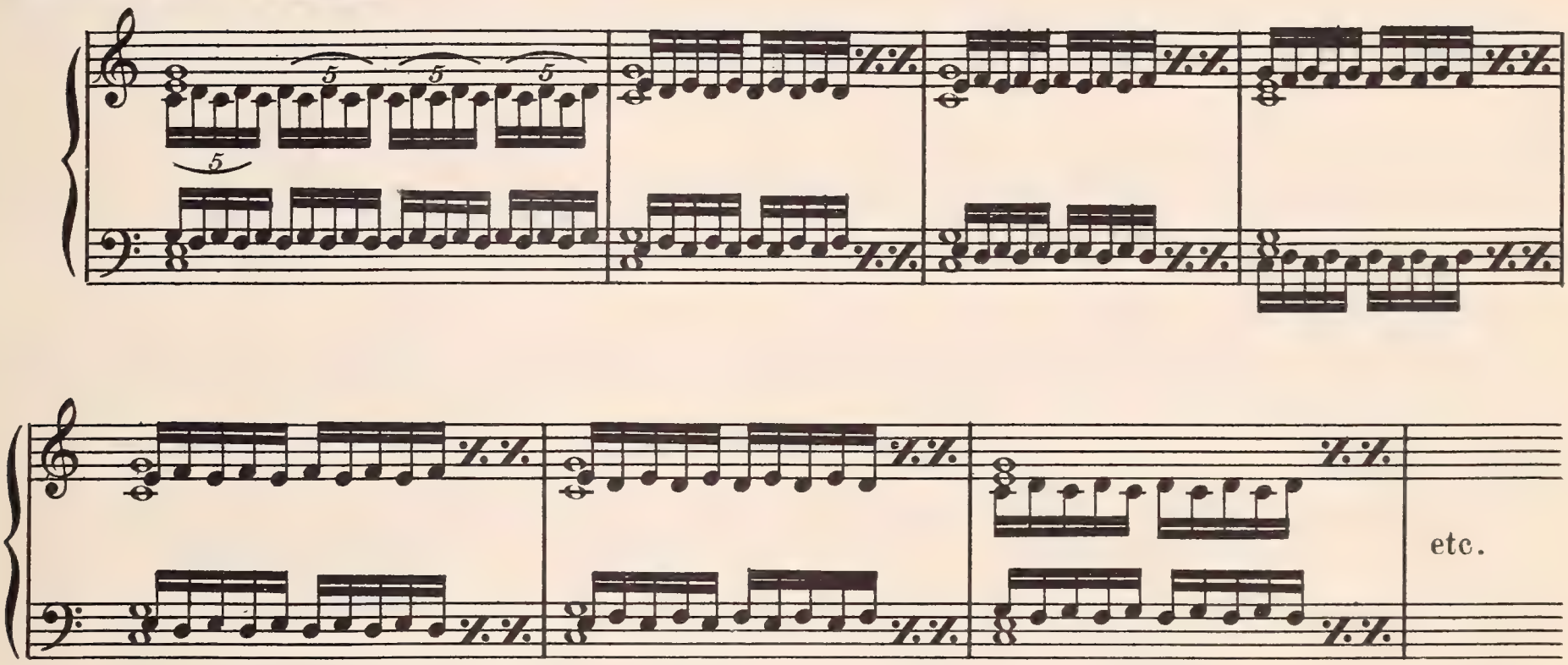

## Example II



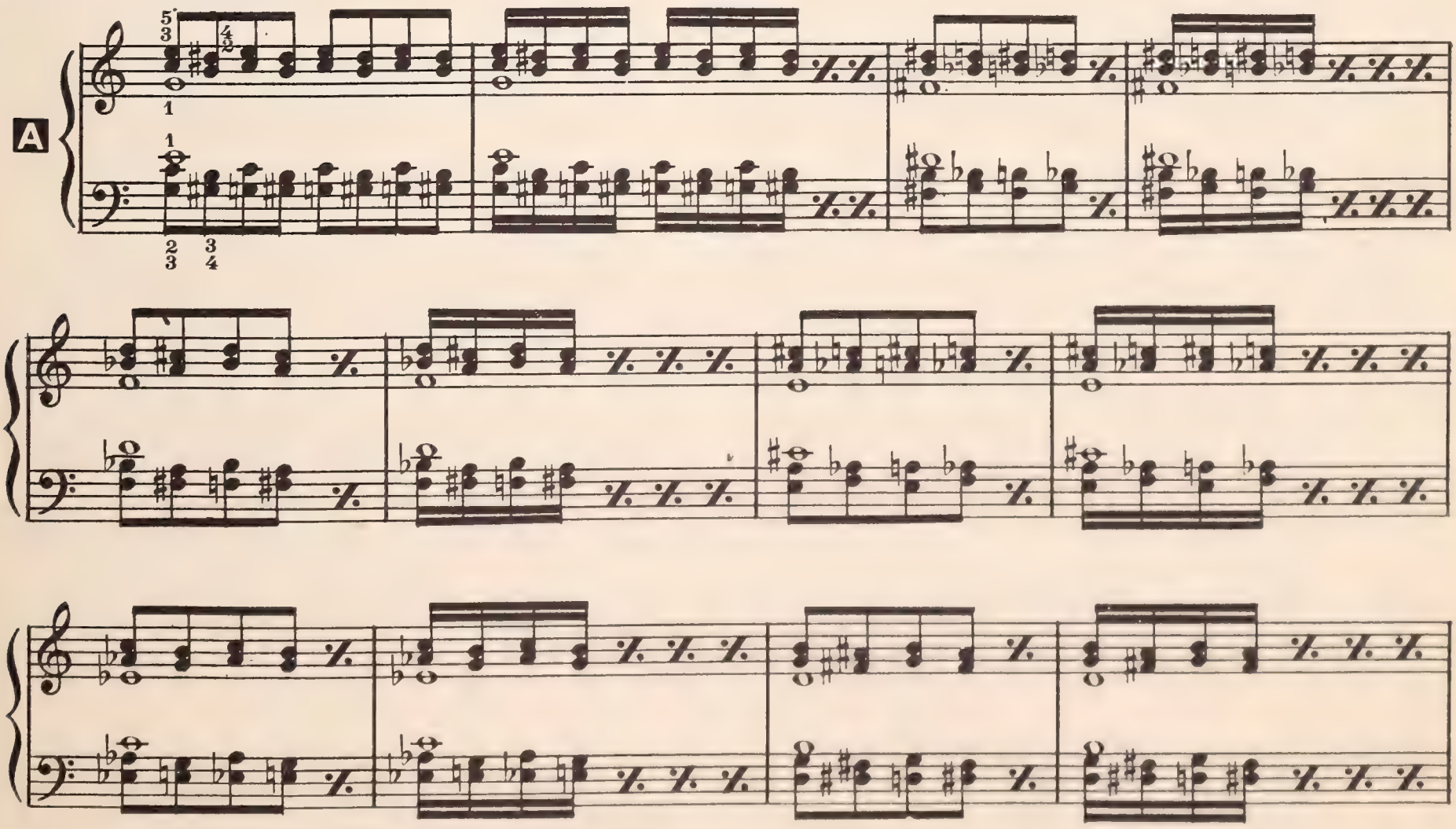
**The same exercise in groups of 6 notes**

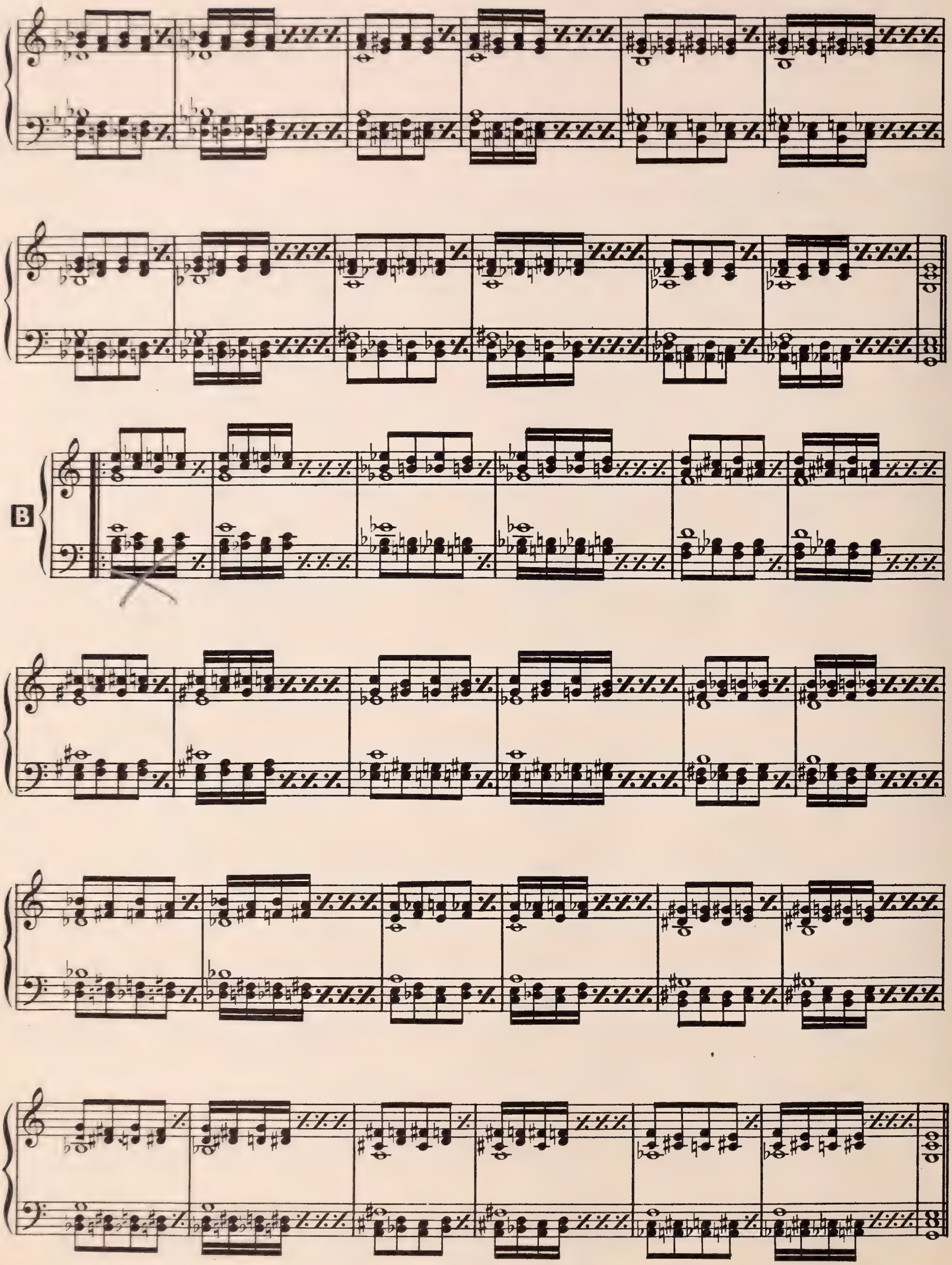



## Example III



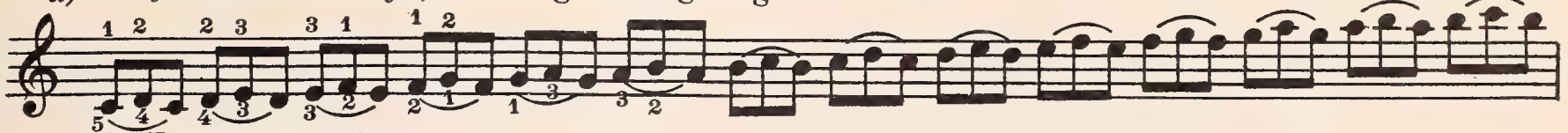

After S. Rachmaninoff



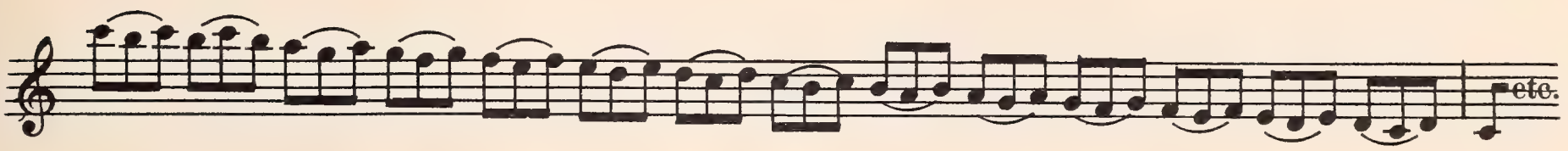

B

# SECTION V - SCALES and ARPEGGIOS

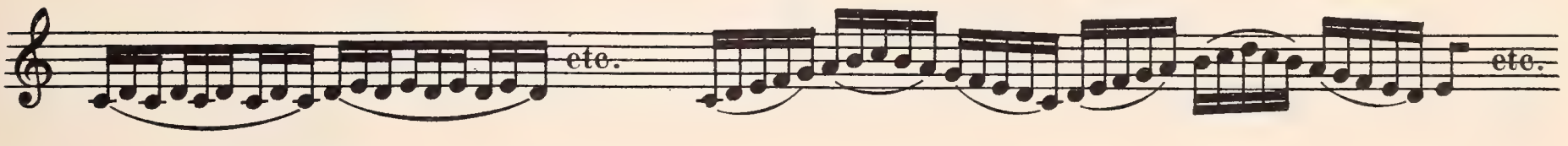
*a)* **Play in different keys, retaining the fingering of the scale**

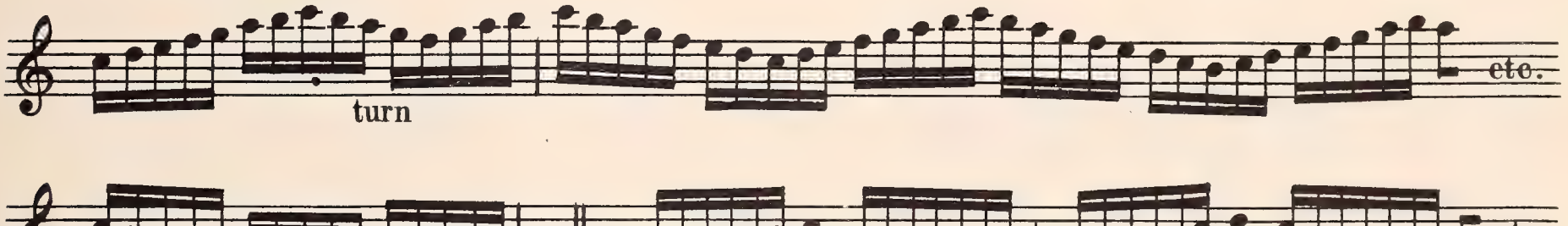


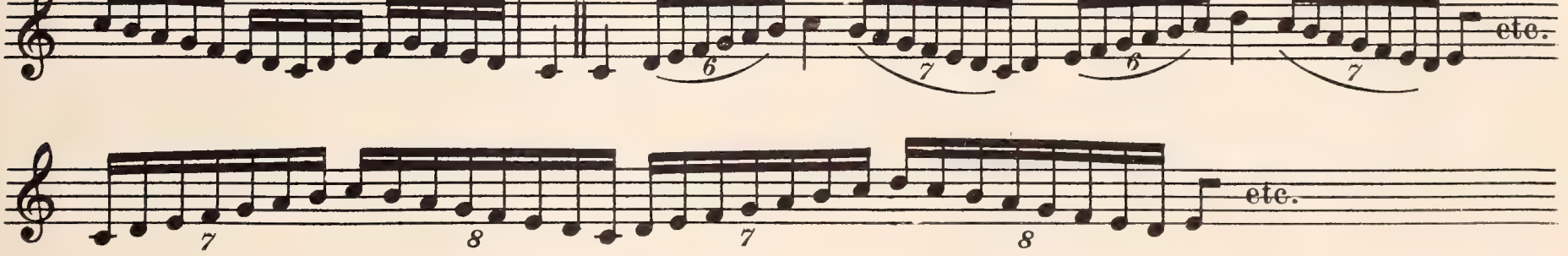
**L. H. one octave lower**




*b)*



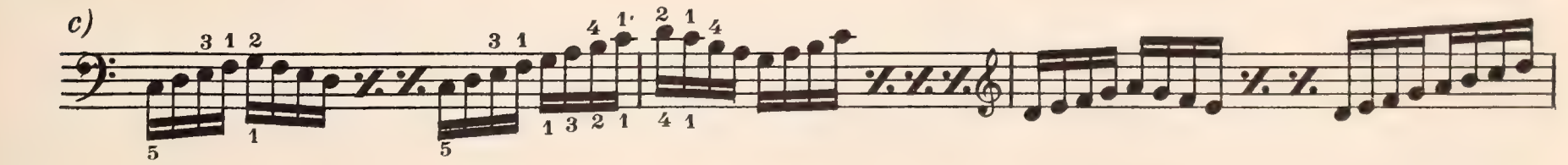



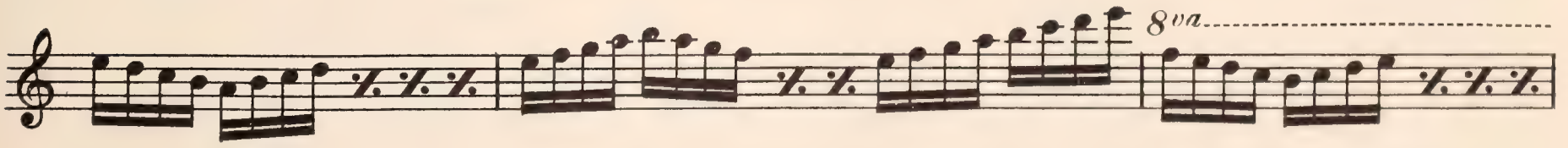



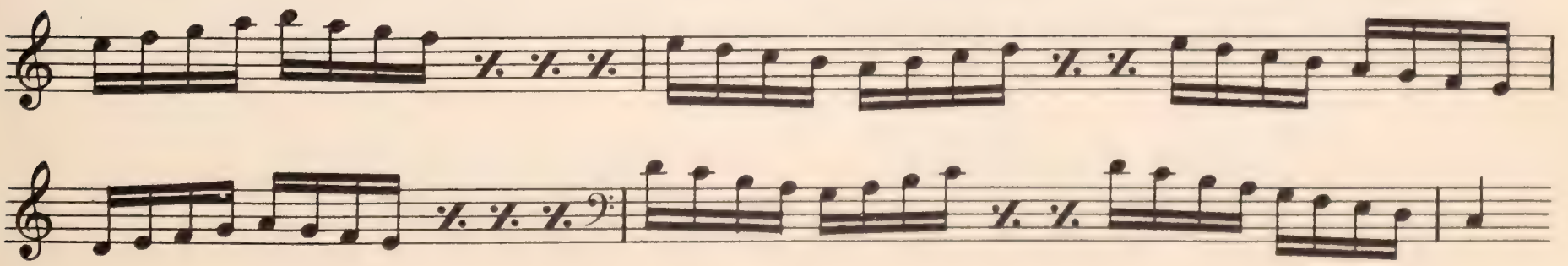




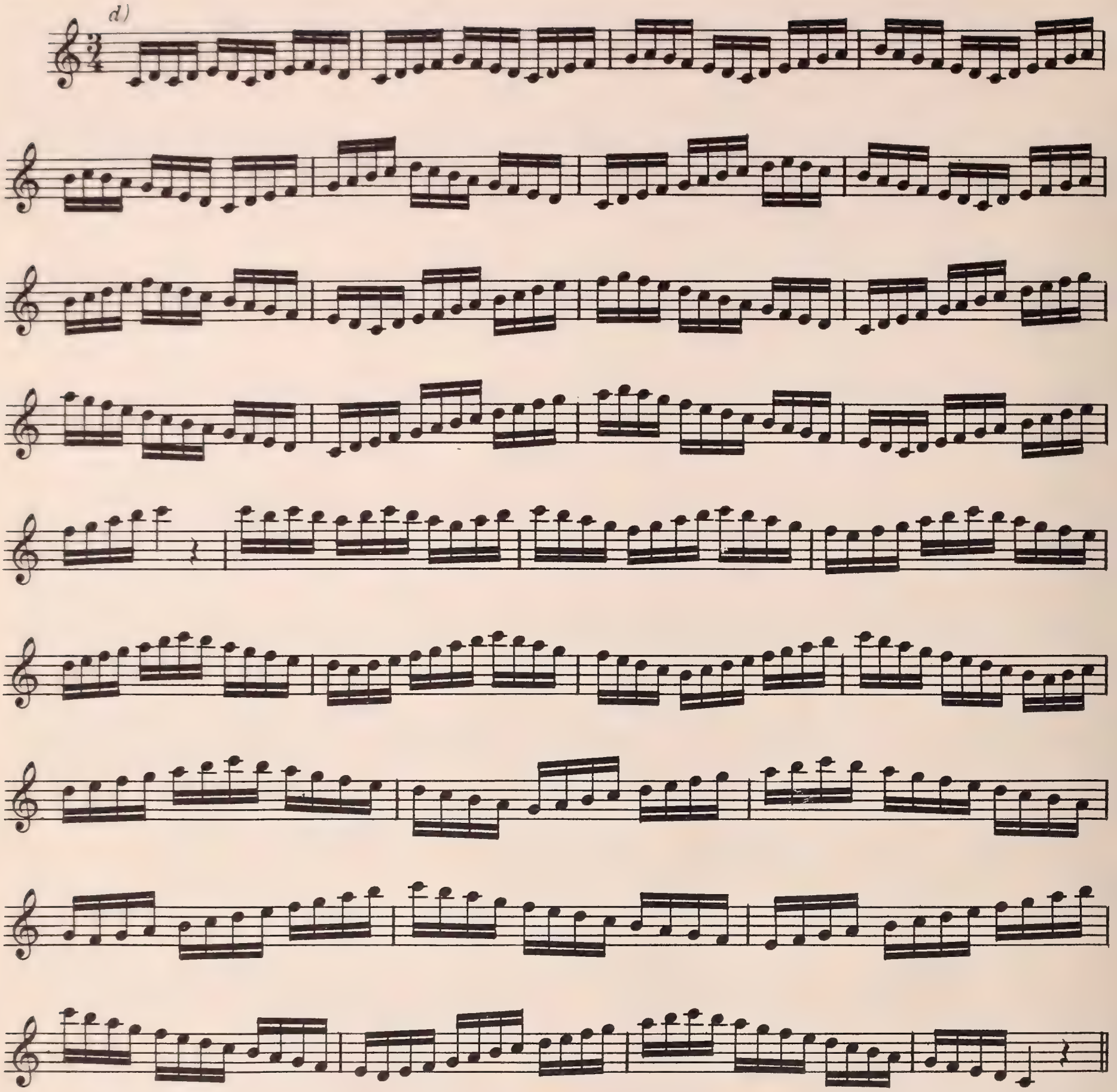
*c)*





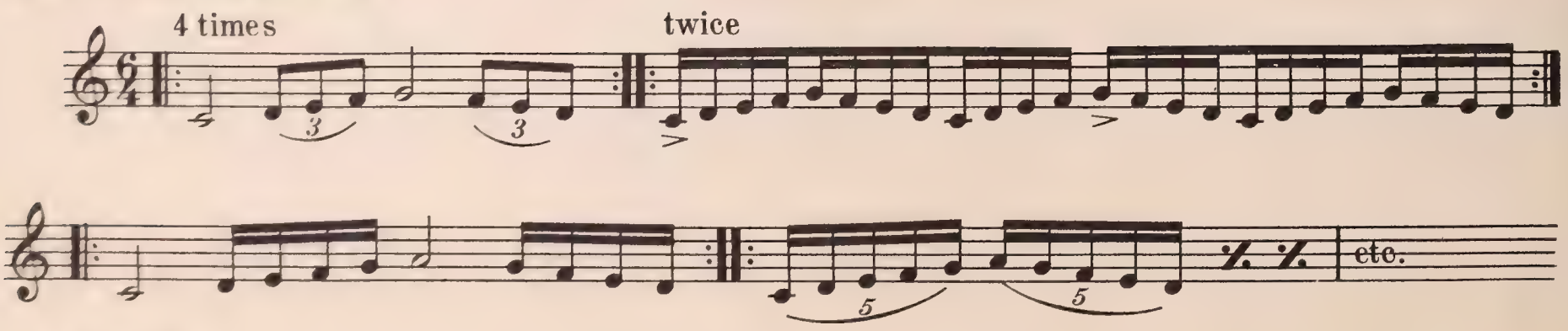



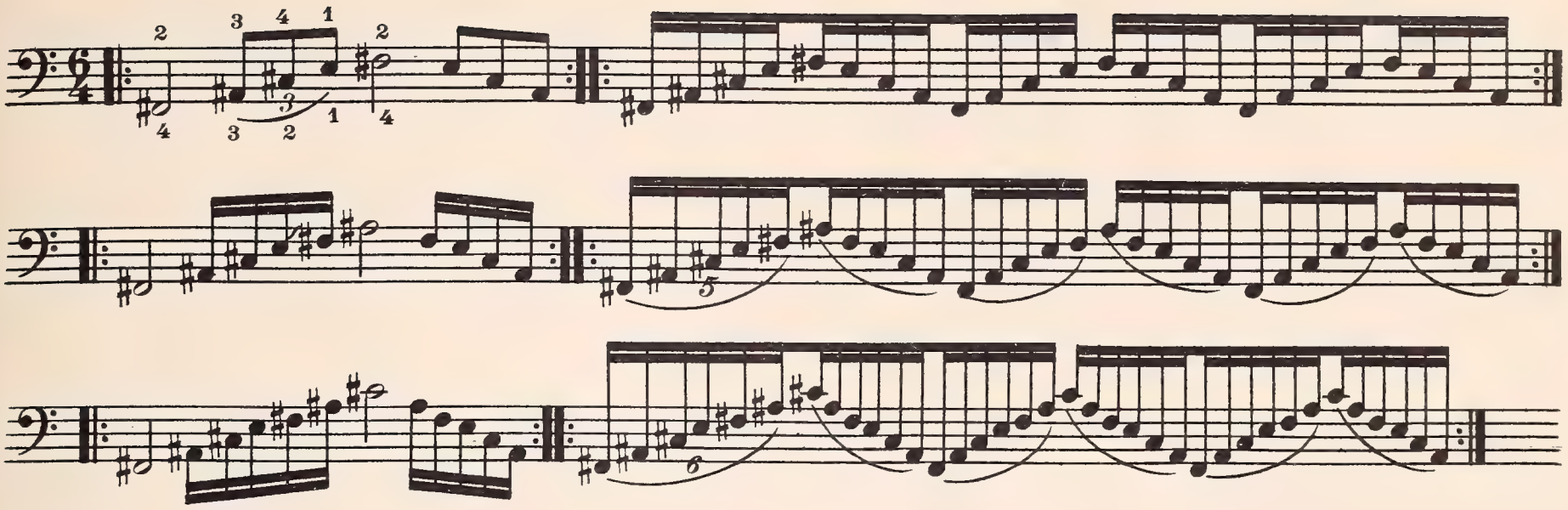
d)



The same in C min. harmonic

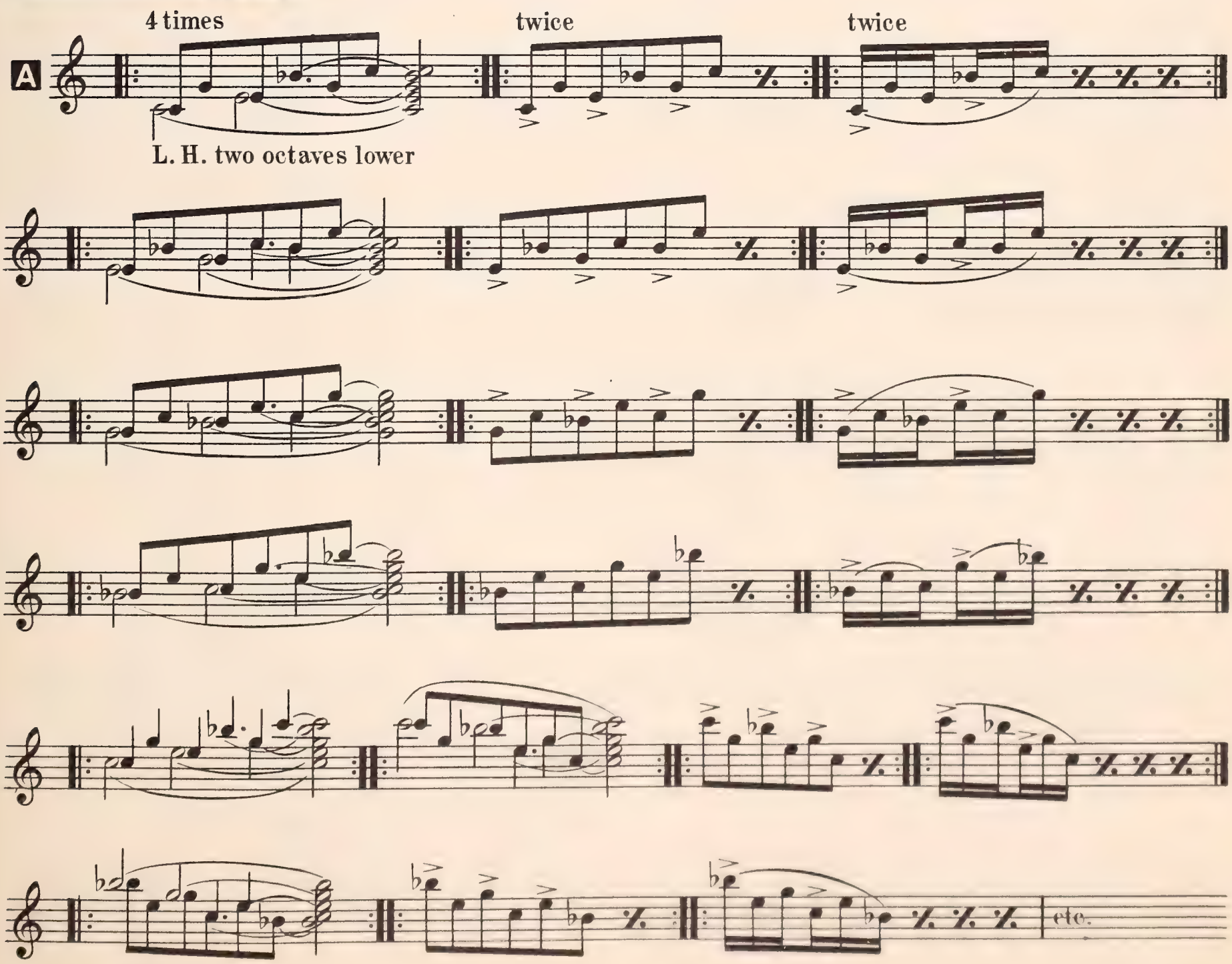
## Example 11





Play the next exercise on these six chords

## Example III



B

etc.

C

D

## Example IV

Use these two chords in sequence as a basis for the following exercises

etc.

A

8va

L. H. one octave lower

8va

etc.

Wrist flexible

B

8va

etc.

C

8va

1-5

etc.

D

etc.

etc.

8va

etc.

8va

etc.

Different rhythms

etc.

etc.

etc.

etc.

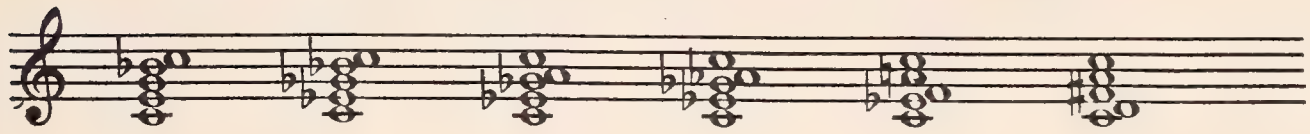
## Example V

Retain the fingering of the chord

turn

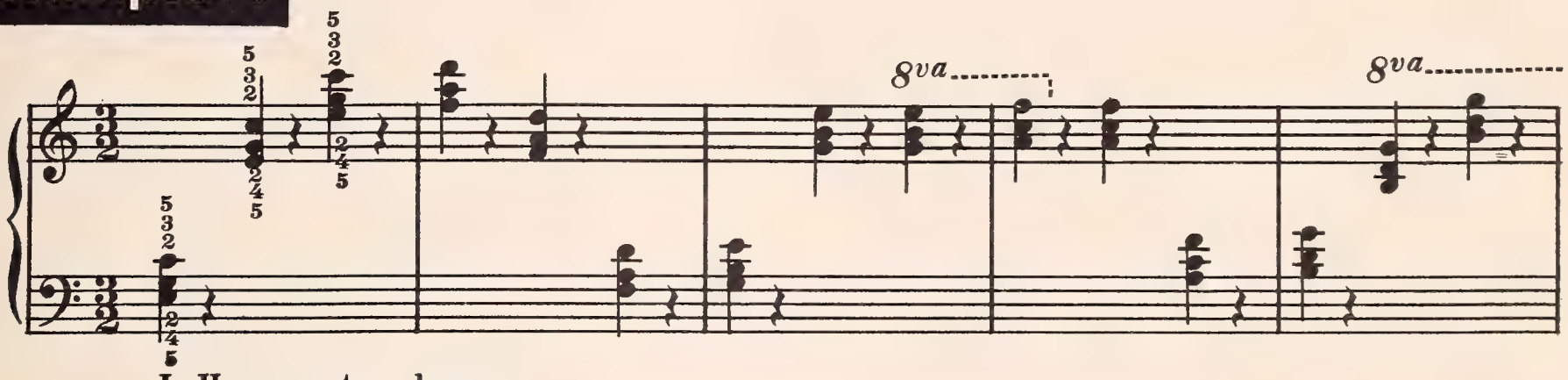
etc.

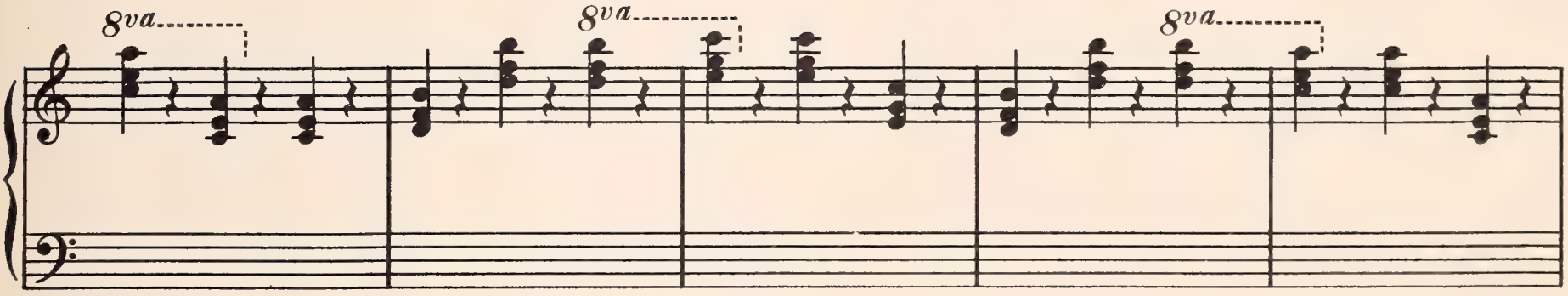
Play the preceding exercise on these six chords

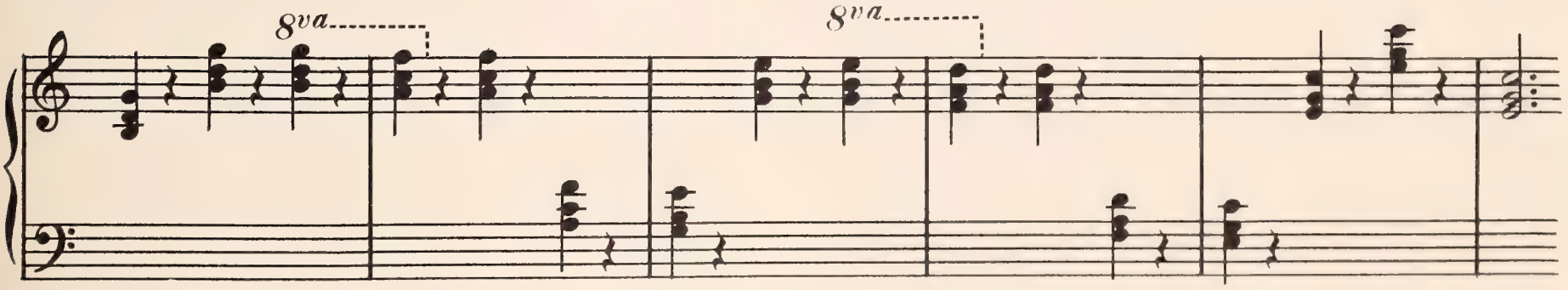


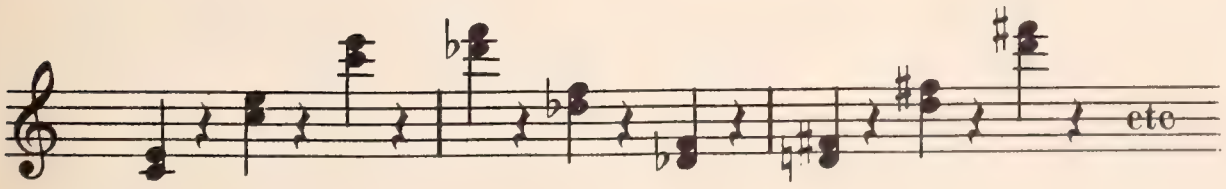
# SECTION VI - WRIST EXERCISES

## Example I



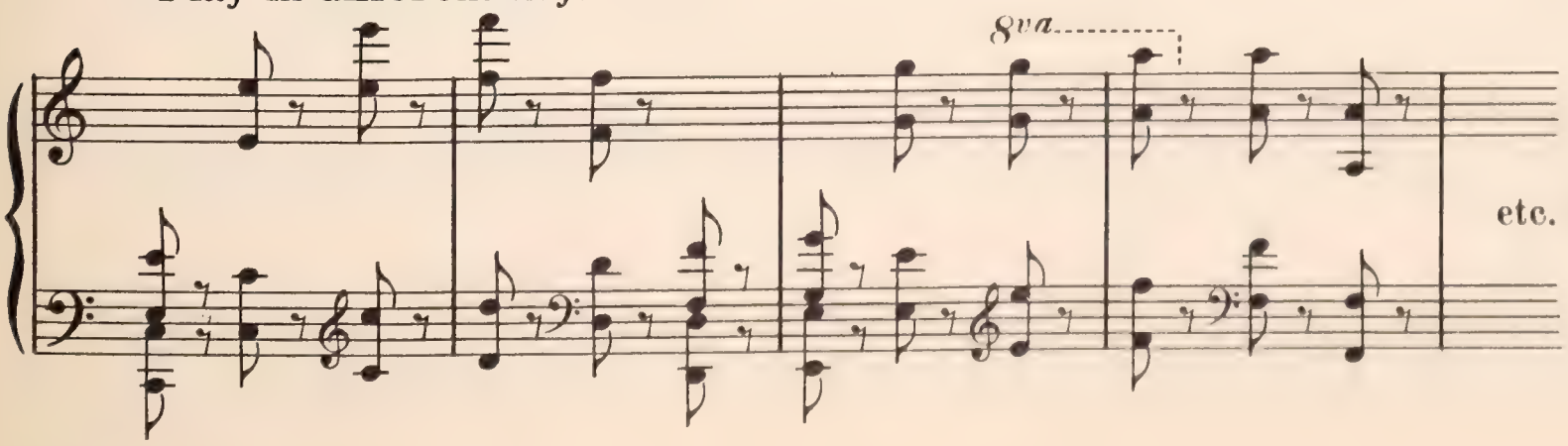



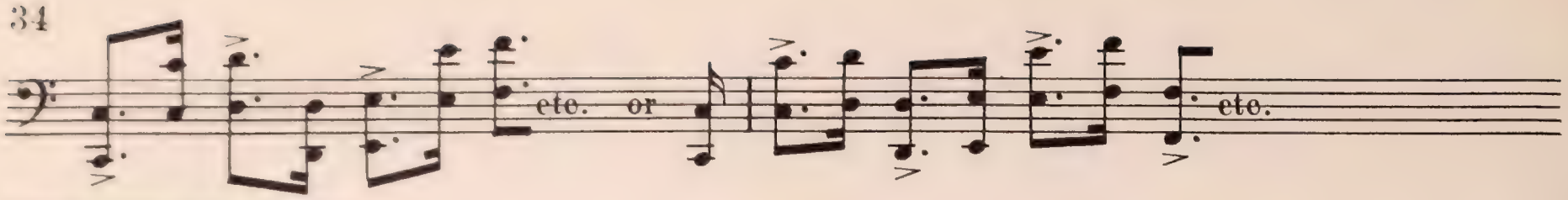




Fingering $\begin{matrix}4 & 5 & 3\\ 2 & 3 & 1\end{matrix}$

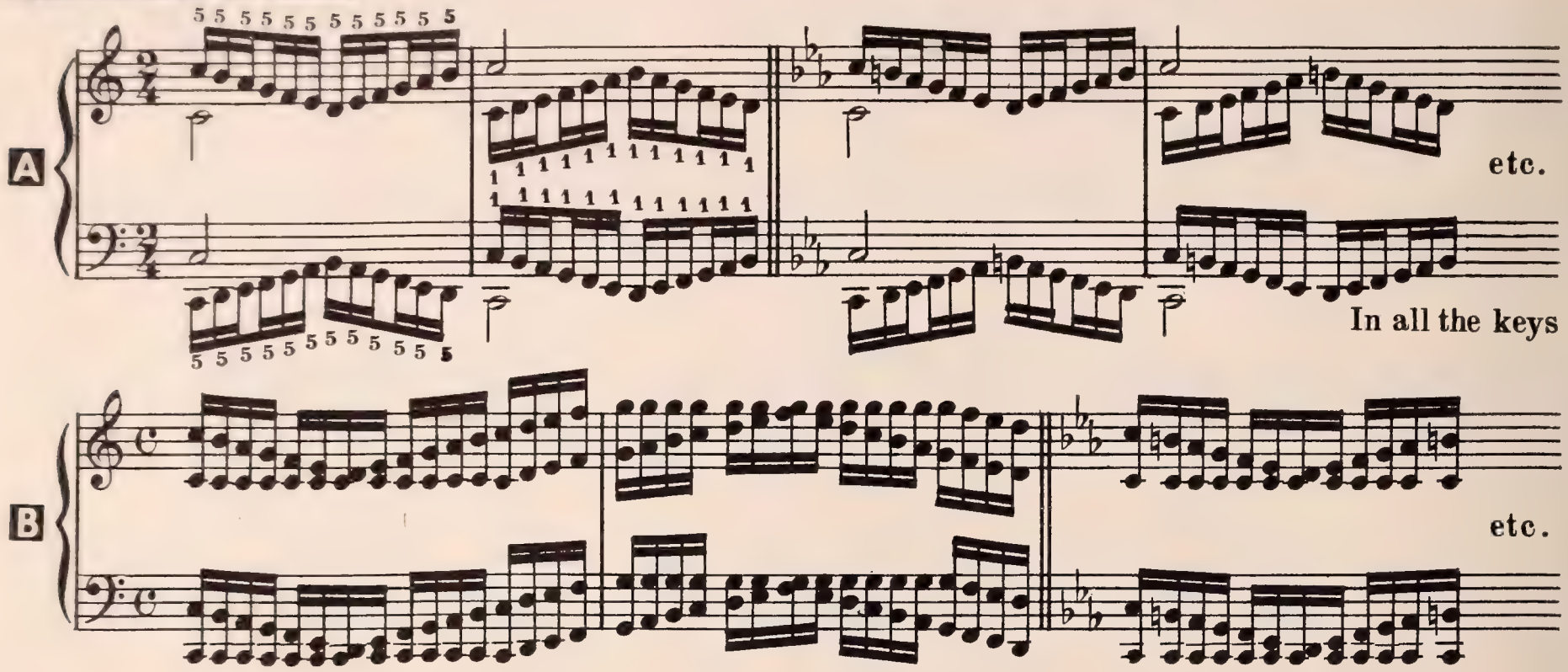
Play in different keys



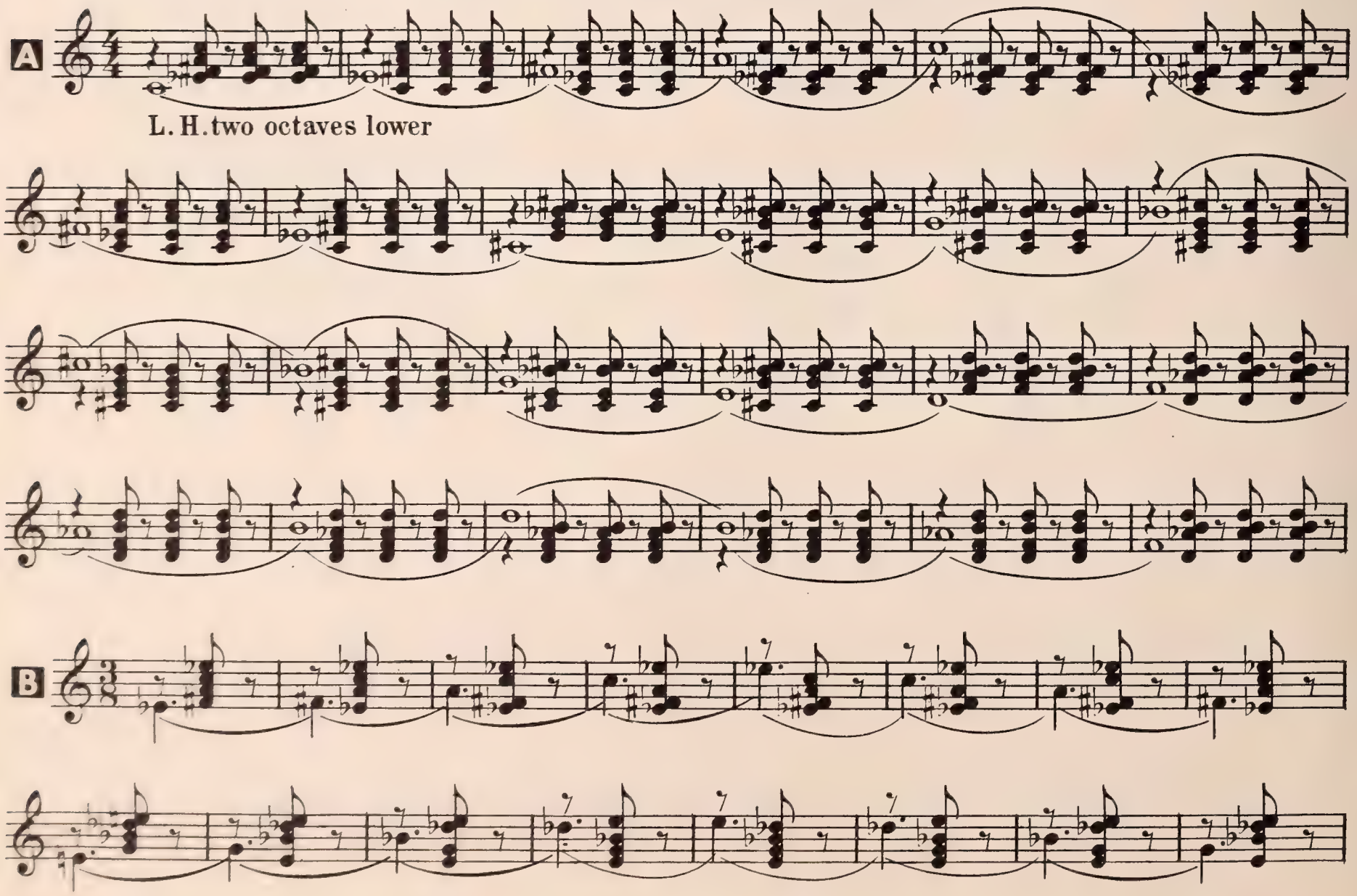

etc. Up and down




## Example 11




Slow; after the stretch the hand resumes its normal position



Faster, legato with up and down wrist motion

C

8va

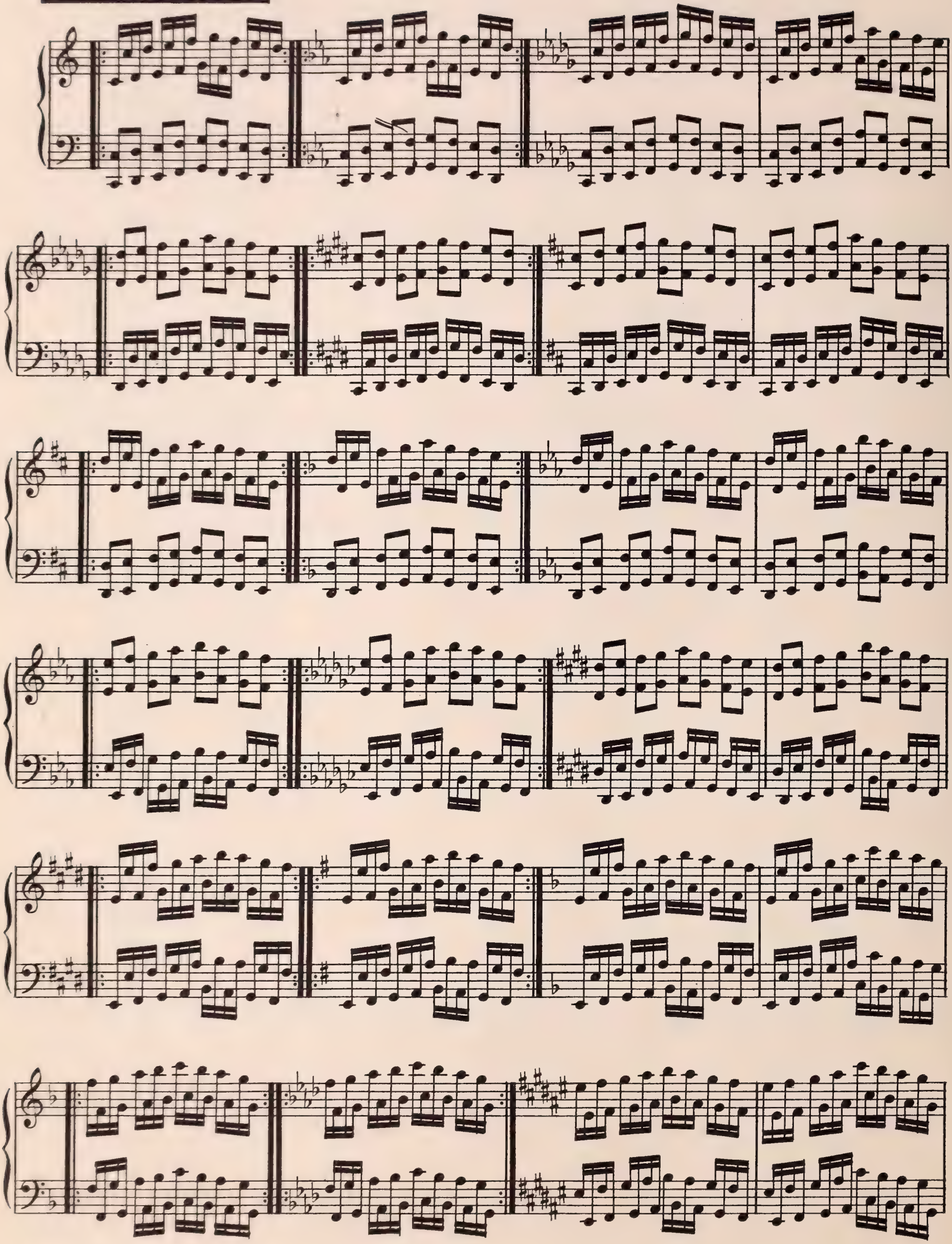
8va

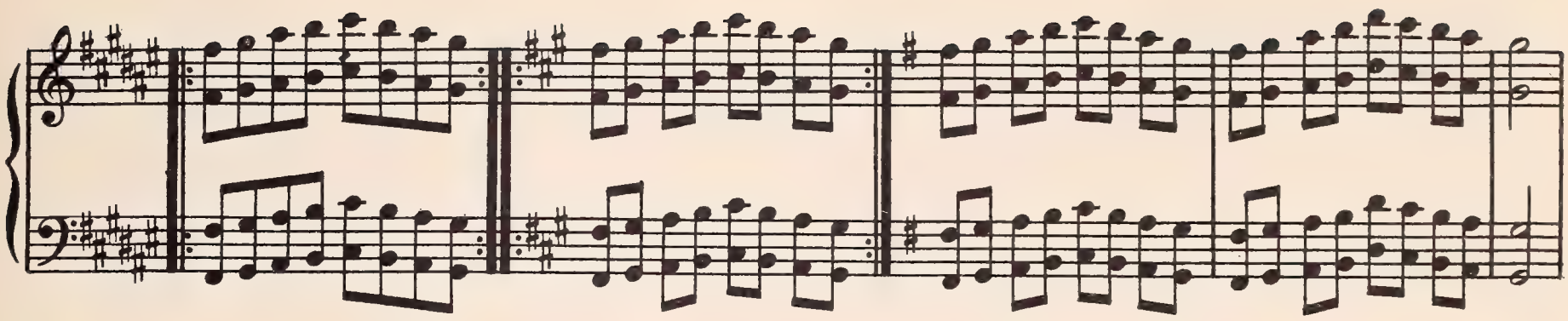
8va

8va

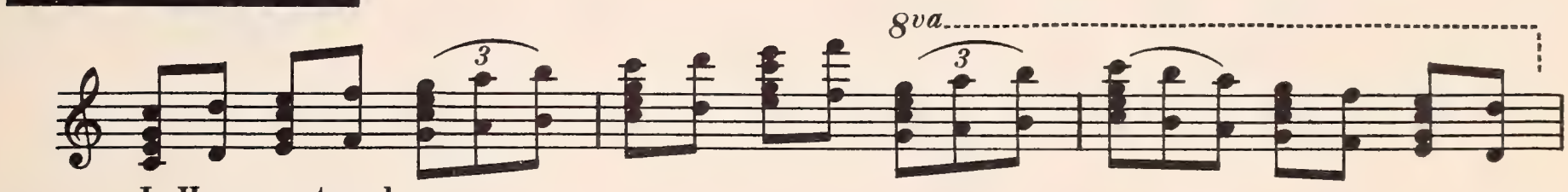
D

# Example IV

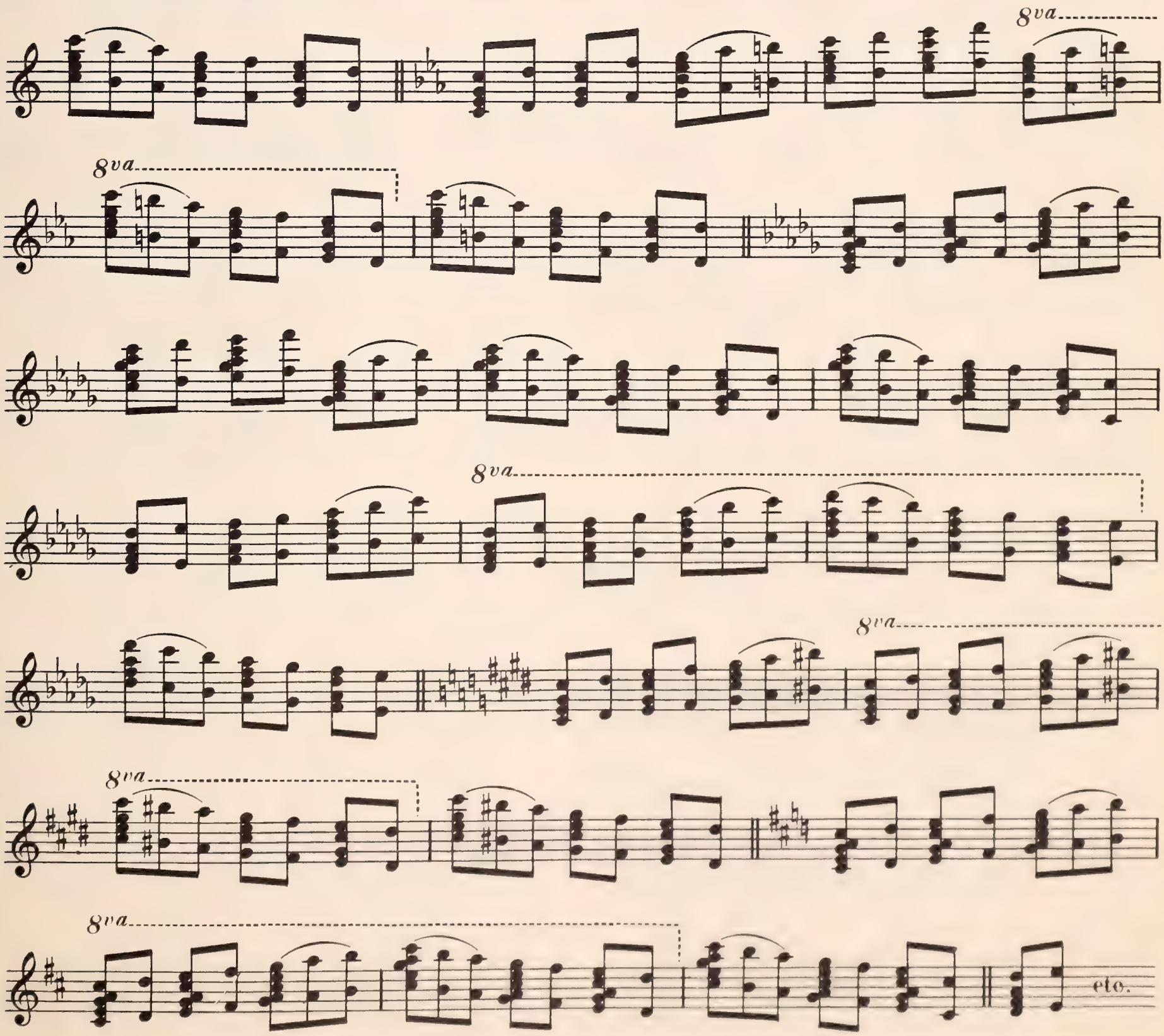




## Example V




L. H. one octave lower



# Example VI

A

etc., from all notes of Chromatic Scale

B

8va basso

twice

8va

8va

twice

etc.

C

Continue in octaves

etc.

C MAJOR

D

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 simile

8 8 8 simile

A MINOR

8 8 8 simile

F MAJOR

8 8 8 simile

D MINOR

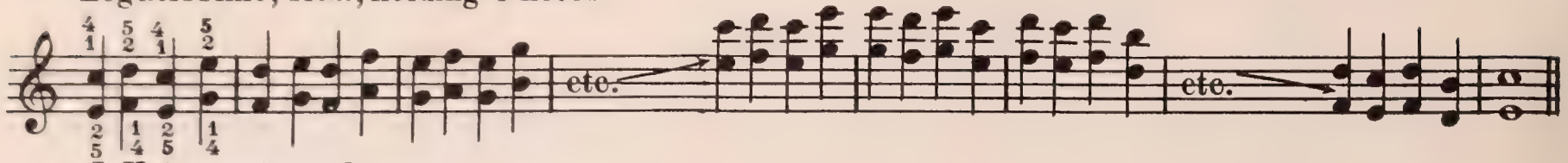
8 8 8 simile

etc.

# SECTION VII - DOUBLE NOTES

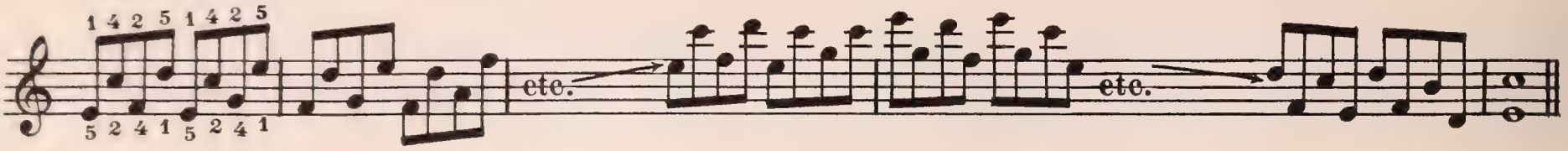
## Example I

Legatissimo, slow, holding 4 notes

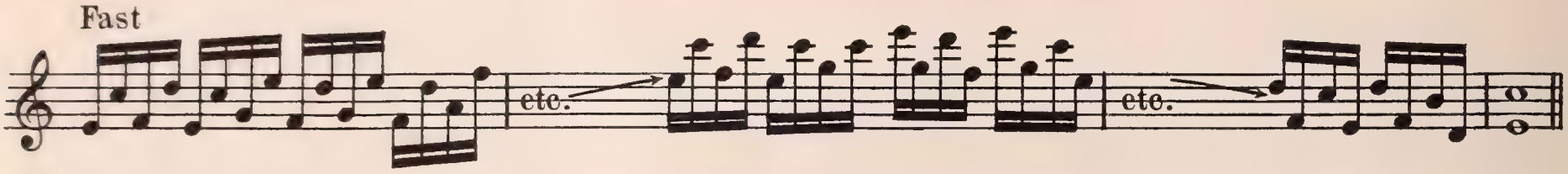



L.H. two octaves lower

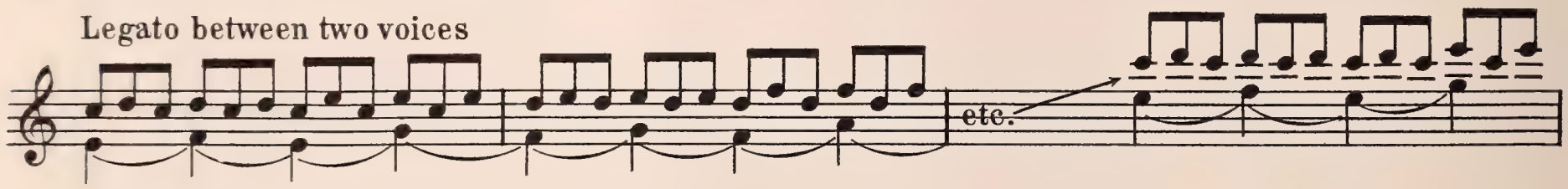
Leggiero faster without holding any notes

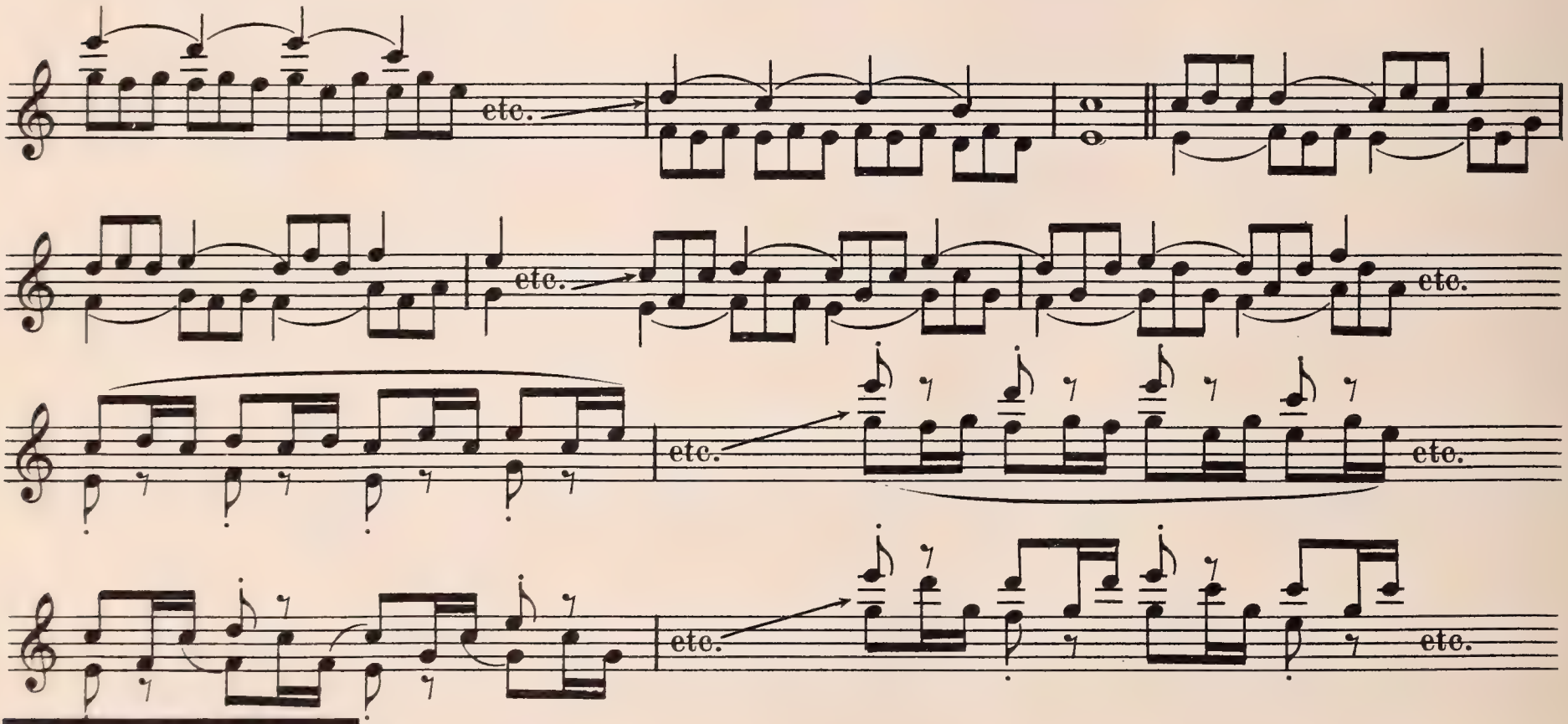



Fast

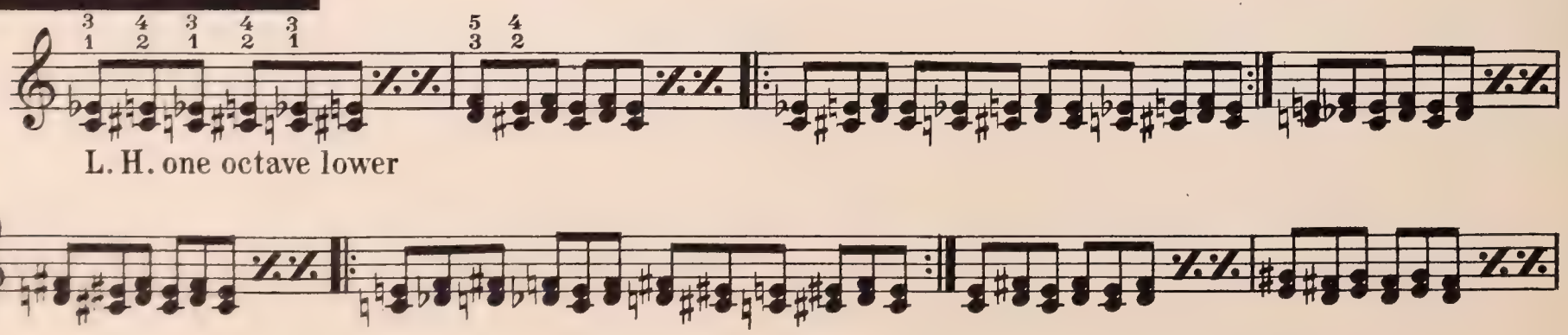



Legato between two voices




## Example II



L. H. one octave lower

etc.

**Use different rhythms**

etc.

etc.

etc.

## Example III

A

etc.

Faster, legato

B

*legato*

Slower, legato

C

etc.

## Example IV

After N. Medtner

C MAJOR

L. H. one octave lower

C MINOR HARMONIC

MODULATION INTO D♭ MAJ.

D♭ MAJOR

C♯ MINOR HARMONIC

MODULATION INTO D MAJOR

etc.

## Example V

etc.

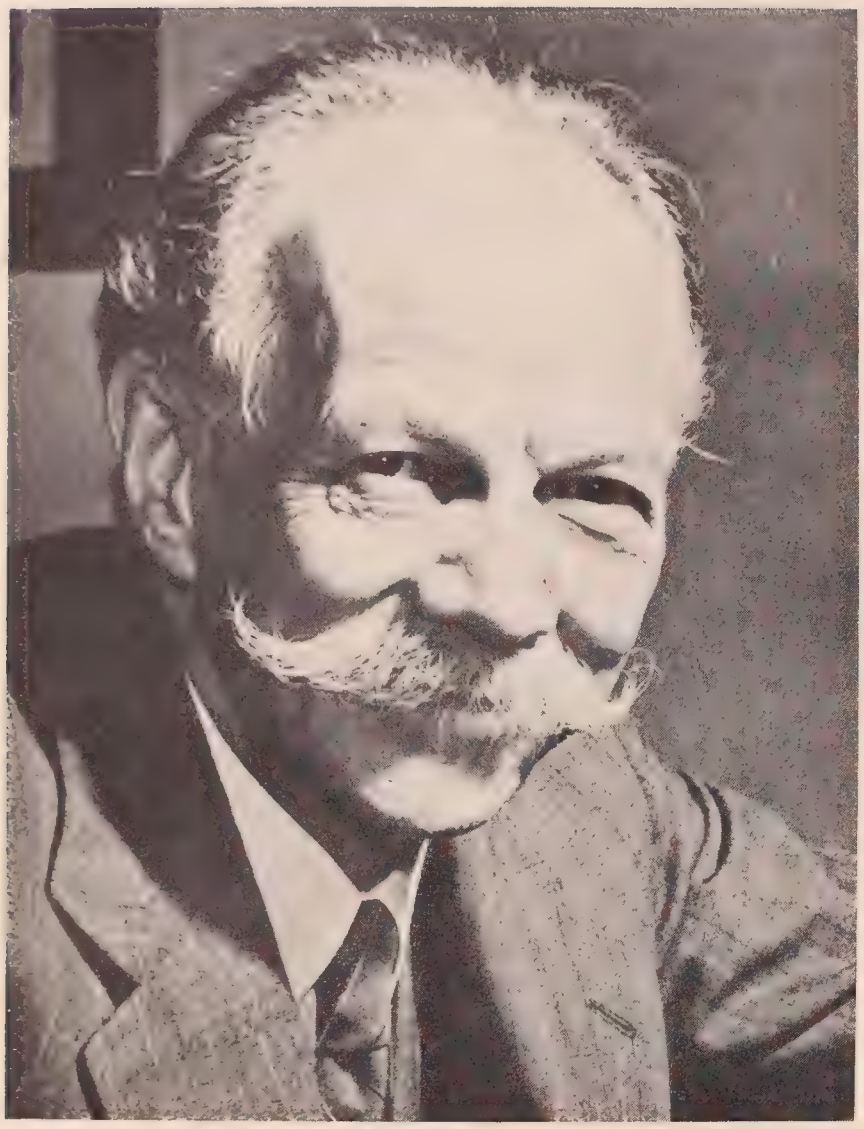
etc.

etc.

8va

etc.

etc.



During his long life, LEON CONUS was regarded as one of the best pedagogues in Russia. He came from a musical French family, who settled in Moscow, where the author was born. He received his earlier education from his father, and later, the Moscow Imperial Conservatory, where his associates as pupils were Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Medtner and Lhevinne. Upon graduating, he devoted his time to teaching for several years at the Imperial Conservatory of Moscow, and later in Paris at the Ecole Normale de Musique. In 1924 he helped found and establish the Russian Conservatory in Paris where he became the vice president of the institution. Leon Conus moved to the United States in 1936. Here, he became Professor of piano at the Cincinnati College of Music. He remained at this post until his untimely death, January 18, 1944.

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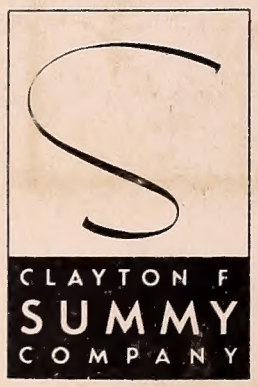
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